

WATER BAPTISM

Its Meaning and Mode

A SCRIPTURE STUDY



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FOREWORD.

All the writer asks of the reader is that he will give what follows his careful consideration, **and read to the end,** before reaching any conclusion. Also that he will not judge what is here presented according to preconceived opinions; but solely in the light of what Scripture teaches; and after earnest prayer for guidance.

What follows has been seen by others and approved.

WATER BAPTISM

Its Meaning and Mode

A SCRIPTURE STUDY

SOMEONE—who does not share the writer's views—has recently suggested that good might result from a careful consideration of all the points involved in the subject of Water Baptism, with the endeavour to arrive at some conclusion which should be for the profit of all. With this suggestion we heartily agree. In what follows, there is no thought of depreciating the importance of Water Baptism or of placing any limitation upon the place it should fill. Just the reverse. The writer wishes at the outset to make this unmistakably clear. He recognizes the Ordinance to be a religious rite of Divine institution which ought not to be neglected or set aside. As this is admitted by most Christians, there is an urgent need for closer agreement and more uniformity of view amongst believers generally, and the Lord's servants in particular. It is undeniable that divergence of view exists, even amongst earnest and devoted Christians who are in agreement in all essentials, and this sometimes produces controversy and friction which leads to very sad and evil results—fellowship is frustrated and the work of the Lord hindered. That difference of opinion as to an outward ordinance should occasion this is as grievous as it is unnecessary. To attach undue importance to form is really contrary to the very genius of Christianity, and is more in keeping with the age of law. While strict adherence to prescribed rules and regulations governed the one, the very reverse characterizes the other, and this will become apparent as we proceed. Yet there are those, no doubt honest and sincere in their conviction, who seem prepared to go any length in upholding their views; and who insist upon everybody seeing the matter exactly as they see it, or paying the penalty.

Those who take this extreme view, will not object surely, to a careful consideration of all that Scripture has to say on the subject, or be offended if the views they hold (and insist upon everyone else holding) are brought to the test of the Word of God. If the evidence of Scripture proves to be in their favour, no one will be more ready than the writer to bow to the truth. Is he not entitled to expect that others will be equally candid and sincere? Let the truth prevail though the heavens fall!

Baptism—Its Place and Purpose

Our inquiry must begin with a consideration of the rite itself; and this quite apart from the question of mode, or to whom it applies. There are many, we fear, who have never made this initial enquiry. They have commenced from the other end, and asked who are to be the subjects of Baptism? But how can we decide who are to be the subjects, if we do not see the place and purpose of Baptism itself?

Baptism did not begin with Christianity, though certain new features stand connected with Christianity. The idea which governs as well as permeates it is the thought of **washing**, with the idea of cleansing. Thus in II Kings V, in connection with the cleansing of Naaman, we find washing referred to four times, though in the A.V. on the last occasion the word in the Hebrew is translated “dipped.” But it has been pointed out that “in the Aramaic the word translated ‘dipped’ simply means to wash.” And as Naaman’s disease was probably in one part of his body only (for he speaks of the prophet striking his hand over the place) it is not at all necessary to suppose that he plunged his whole body into the river Jordan. In the instruction given, ^{the} emphasis is upon

the words “wash and thou shalt be clean”: and as to the result, we are told “And he was **clean**.” The words in the original used here are the very words afterwards employed in connection with Baptism, in various languages.* Sprinkling with the ashes of an heifer (Numb. XIX) is rendered by Cyril of Alexandria as “**Baptized** with the ashes of an heifer.” Amongst the Jews the “sprinkling with the ashes of an heifer” was a baptism. (Heb. IX. 13). A **baptized** man was esteemed clean. “**Defiled**, that is to say . . . **unwashen** hands.” (Mark VII. 2.) “The divers washings” of Heb. IX. 10 were “baptisms.” This includes the **sprinkling** of the ashes of an heifer. (Numb. XIX.)

As Tyeth Hart says, “The **pouring** of water on the sacrifice on Carmel is spoken of by Origen as a baptism.” In Mark VII. 4 the Greek word for **baptize** is translated “wash.” And, again, in Luke XI. 38. If we compare this with the words addressed to Saul of Tarsus, “Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins,” (Acts XXII. 16) we shall see that the thought of washing is still retained. Baptism meant that Saul had renounced his former conduct and definitely broken with his past. He was cleansed from it. He was washed. There was a wholly new condition. His calling on the Name of the Lord indicated that henceforth he owned the authority, and became the follower and servant, of the One he had formerly persecuted. Instead of thinking, as in the past, that he ought to do many things contrary to the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, he was willing to become His bond-slave. It was a complete change of position—a public renunciation of his past. And this was effected by Baptism.

* “The Jews who read their Bible in Greek were familiar with the word “baptize” as meaning a special cleansing, and thereby introducing them into a new condition or estate.—*Axtell*.

We find a similar idea presented in I Peter III. 20-2. The apostle Peter likens Baptism to “eight souls **saved** by **water**,” in the case of Noah and his family. They were saved by **water**. The water closed their connection with a world under judgment, with all its corruptions, and transferred them to a cleansed earth. The apostle asserts in the most unequivocal way, that in a “like figure Baptism doth also now save us.” It is a like **figure**. Therefore those who are baptized are introduced into a wholly new condition. How peculiar it would be if **water** baptism did not carry with it the thought of washing, and therefore, of cleansing. Yet with many this idea is entirely absent from their conception of the rite. According to them, the only fit subjects for baptism are those **already** cleansed. Yet one paramount idea associated with water is cleansing. And, moreover, a person does not wash in water because he is already clean or to show he is cleansed, but in order to cleansing. Yet this idea seems to have disappeared entirely from the views of some people concerning Baptism. Does not this fact alone raise serious doubts as to the scriptural character of their views?

There can be little doubt that the Apostle Paul has Baptism in mind when he writes to the Corinthians (I Cor. VI. 11) “But ye are **washed**, but ye are sanctified” (set apart). Both washed and sanctified here occur before “justified.” Sanctified, therefore, refers to an **external** sanctification which is effected by Baptism. There is a sanctification which takes place **after** justification, but this is quite different. So that we see how entirely the thought of washing is inherent in Water Baptism.

II. Is Water Baptism in Scripture Related to an Inward State or to an Outward Position?

What has already been said prepares the way for the

discussion of the above question—a question, be it said, of the utmost importance. Indeed, it is not too much to say that our view of Baptism will depend upon the answer we give to it. And such answer will determine whether our views are founded upon and drawn from Scripture, or are merely preconceived ideas based upon a very superficial interpretation of certain words.

How is the matter presented in Scripture? Are we told anywhere that a certain spiritual condition is the necessary qualification? Is it anywhere stated that water baptism is for **true** believers only? Do we find such an expression anywhere as “Believers’ baptism?” Do we find the words—often supposed to be scriptural—“Believe and be baptized?” The answer is No—an unqualified, emphatic No!

“Surely,” someone will be ready to say, “that last expression is to be found there?” Well, we must confess that we have not searched the entire New Testament for the express purpose of discovering whether this is so or not; but trusting to our knowledge of Scripture we are prepared to endorse the words of one who has made the subject we are discussing a special study, when he tells us “‘Believe and be baptized’ is not Scripture, though it was quoted as such by a Baptist Minister!”

Will the reader carefully ponder this question: How can baptism rest upon true faith in the baptized, or upon such an one being a true child of God and born again, when it is impossible for anyone except God to be **absolutely** sure upon such a point? As someone has said: “It is given to none of us to discern the spirit and read the heart.” “The Lord knoweth them that are His,” but He only. Thus baptism, in Scripture, does not rest upon that which is inward and spiritual. But persons who had received instruction and made a profession were baptized with a view to discipleship.

In connection with this another point needs to be considered. People are sometimes baptized on the same day as they confess, or within a few days (vide Acts II. 41 and XVI. 33). Under such conditions who can test the reality of their spiritual state? It is simply impossible. Confessing with the mouth is not the same as believing in the **heart**, and it is with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and the heart is known to God only.*

How can a divine ordinance, like Water Baptism, be based upon conditions which may or may not exist? The whole thing may prove to be a fiasco if spoken of as "**believers'** baptism," for those who are baptized may not be true believers after all.

The administration of the rite of Water Baptism is nowhere in Scripture made dependant upon a certain and well-defined inward condition. Consequently, the term "Believers' Baptism" is foreign to Scripture. If further proof of this were needed it is found in the fact that in the account given in the Acts the inward spiritual state of those undergoing Baptism often differed considerably. In one case it was "for the remission of sins." On another occasion, those receiving Baptism are said to have believed, but "the Holy Ghost had fallen upon none of them." And on still another, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word"; and these were baptized afterwards. All this shows that Water Baptism does not stand in relation to an inward state. In the house of Cornelius the Holy Ghost had fallen upon those who heard the word, and there was the demonstration of it, "for they heard them speak with tongues." How could "Water Baptism" make such evidence more plain,

* The fact is, in all the cases mentioned in the Acts there is no reference to probation. Surely this becomes absolutely necessary in Believers' Baptism. Is not this proof that Baptism is not related to what is supposed already true. It is in this sense the words "connect" or "related" are used throughout.

or add to it in any way? To suggest such a thing is a monstrous supposition. But if "Water Baptism" is the ordained rite by which people are introduced into an outward place of privilege on earth—the visible Church (looked at as a sphere of profession)—and by which they were admitted outwardly to the Christian company, and into an external association—then it was as necessary in the case of those Gentiles as in any other case.

The instance of Simon Magus (Acts VIII.) is further proof. Either Philip made a most deplorable blunder in baptizing Simon Magus as a true believer or the thought, whether or not Simon was a **real** believer, did not enter into the matter. Simon must have received a certain amount of instruction and made a certain profession, and on this ground he was baptized. For baptism is over and over again in Scripture connected with **discipleship**. (See later.) And although afterwards the apostle Peter addresses him in such stern language—language which leaves us in no doubt as to Simon's actual state—yet his baptism is not called in question, nor is Philip censured for having administered it.

Does Scripture anywhere lay down a condition such as the following: "Now Water Baptism is for true believers and saved persons only, and particular care must be taken to see that such only are baptized?" Is there a single passage, which in these exact words, or any words like them, lays this down as a fundamental condition? Not a word. And why? Simply because Water Baptism is an external rite, and therefore does not stand in juxtaposition with what is internal. It serves its **own** purpose. As we have seen, it is a **washing**, an outward purification, a change of position before men; it introduces to an outward place of privilege. This explains the Apostle Peter's way

of putting it: "Can any **man forbid** water?" In other words: "Can anyone refuse to these people—though Gentiles—the rite which will place them on an equal footing with us, and admit them into association with us externally, and to all the privileges we enjoy?" They had to be received into the Christian Company, and admission was by water baptism. This was the responsibility of those already there, and accounts for Peter words, "Can any **man** forbid water."

A very important fact, which bears upon the point we are at present discussing, is that the Bible speaks of persons believing without ever implying that they were true believers, or, as we speak, "saved people." It also refers to those who were disciples, and yet not true believers. Such, however, in many cases, would have been proper candidates for baptism, as the New Testament regards the rite. Let us look at a few illustrations.

The case of Simon Magnus has been referred to already. But more needs to be said. How does Scripture speak of him? Thus: "Simon himself believed also." Such is the concise and definite statement. And we must remember that this was written long after the event. Yet from what follows we are bound to conclude that his was not genuine faith. Nor was he saved. For it is not enough to believe. The all important point is: **What** do I believe; and why? There are those who are so carried away with the idea of "believers' " baptism, and find Simon's case such an obstacle in their path, that they are ready to contend that, after all, Simon was a true believer. Well, if a true believer is one who is in danger of perishing:—"Thy money perish **with thee**"; if it can be said of a true believer, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter"; if he is one who is in "the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity," we would like to know the difference

between a “true believer” and one who is not. Yet of the man who presently was to manifest himself in such a way as to bring upon him this scathing denunciation, Scripture simply states, “Simon himself believed also,” and relates that baptism immediately followed.*

Now why was he baptized? Can we suppose, for a moment, that it was **as** a true believer? That is, from **that** standpoint and in that relation? Is it not far more in accordance with the situation and all connected with it to suppose that Simon having manifested a certain willingness to identify himself with the others who had been baptized (see previous verse), and to accept Christianity and become a disciple (or, in other words, a learner, for we read “he continued with Philip”) that he was accordingly baptized as the outward sign that his sorcery and witchcraft were things of the past, and that he was to become a true follower of the Lord Jesus Christ?

But, alas, for Simon! The words which follow (v. 13) only too clearly indicate what his mind was set upon. He evidently thought that some greater power than any he had exercised before would become his, and so he might astonish the world more than ever; for we read: “He continued with Philip and **wondered**, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.” Nor need we be **astonished** that before long he was offering the apostles money, “saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost.” There had been no conviction of sin, and no felt need of

* Two facts emerge from this incident—one, that a person is not made a true child of God by baptism: for Simon was baptized, yet what is said of him forbids the thought that he was truly converted. The other, that Peter does not call in question his baptism, or censure Philip for any hasty or ill-advised conduct in the administration of the rite: which the latter surely deserved if Simon was baptized on the ground that he was a true believer.

Christ as a Saviour. He was impressed by the wonders he saw and nothing more.

Indeed, Simon reminds us of those we read of in John II, of whom it is said: "Many **believed** in His Name, when they saw the miracles which He did. " Yet of whom it is recorded, "Jesus did not commit Himself unto them, because He knew all men and needed not that any should testify of man, for He knew what was in man."

If Water Baptism depended upon our knowing for certain whether a person was a genuine believer, how many would be baptized seeing that such knowledge is not given to us? It only shows how impossible it is to connect Baptism with an inward state.

There are others belonging to the same category referred to in Luke VIII. 13 and John VI. 64/6. . Our Lord tells us, "They on the rock are they, which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a **while believe**, and in time of temptation fall away." Yet, on the face of it, would not such persons in all probability be considered, even by Baptists, suitable candidates for baptism? There is **joy**. They profess to believe. Who could tell that they had **no root**? Who would declare that all was superficial? Especially as Baptism in New Testament times, as we have said, often took place without probation. Now, is a Divine ordinance to rest upon such a basis? Are we asked to base it on an uncertainty? No, it is clear that Water Baptism must stand in a different connection. It must be related to what is outward and visible. And, therefore, it accomplishes its purpose whatever the actual inward condition of the recipient. It is the rite by means of which the candidate is received into the **outward** sphere of Christianity and becomes identified with those already there.

They receive him or her amongst themselves by the ordinance of baptism.

III. Baptism connected with Discipleship. Disciples not Necessarily True Believers.

In John VI. 64 it is recorded that our Lord, on one occasion, said to disciples of His: "But there are some of you that believe not." And further, we read, "From that time many of His disciples went back, and walked no more with Him."

Now these people were disciples. They regarded Christ as their Teacher, and they followed Him. Undoubtedly, they had been baptized. They would not have been regarded as disciples had they refused baptism (or apart from Baptism). But it is evident they were not baptized as **true believers** (as the sequel proves) for the Lord says, "there are some of you that believe not." They were baptized as disciples. John III. 22 confirms this. There we read: "After these things came Jesus and His disciples into the land of Judæa, and there he tarried with them, and baptized." Again, v. 26, the Jews say, referring to our Lord, "The same baptizeth, and all men come to Him." Christ made disciples by teaching and by baptism. The first verse of chapter IV. makes this abundantly clear. We read: "Jesus made and baptized more **disciples** than John." In every case it is **disciples**. We are told indeed that "Jesus Himself baptized not but His disciples" and that when He knew the Pharisees had heard, "He made and baptized more disciples than John, He left Judæa."* possibly out of some delicate feeling for John, but, possibly also, because he felt that all this talk about Baptism was unprofitable. We would add, that, we

* "This does not necessarily mean that they were disciples first. It is the common classical construction called *hendiadys*, i.e., two things in one, or one act in two aspects."

should not be discussing it now except for the attitude of certain brethren, (which is purely sectarian) and on account of the erroneous views which, in article after article and pamphlet after pamphlet, are pressed upon the Lord's people for their acceptance, as though such views were nothing but the truth of Scripture, whereas often they have no Scriptural foundation whatsoever.

That discipleship in Scripture is not identical with true, saving faith we have clearly proved. There may also be true faith where there is not true discipleship. Joseph of Arimathaea was undoubtedly a true believer, but we read he was a disciple **secretly** for fear of the Jews." (John XIX. 38.) And of the chief rulers, it says, "Many believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." Again, our Lord says to "those Jews which believed on Him, If ye continue in My word, then are ye my disciples indeed." (John VIII. 31; XII. 42/3.) Thus discipleship stands related to what is outward, but faith is inward (though linked with **an outward** object). And it is clear that baptism is connected in Scripture with the former. To show how different the two are: who would think of laying down as a condition of being a true believer the characteristics of a true disciple? See Luke XIV. 25/7.

In this connection it may be asked, Why does Paul say, "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in my own name," except that the very idea of baptism in people's minds, in those days, stood in the closest possible relation to discipleship. Had it been merely a question of the **faith of the baptized** Paul need have had no fear for no one would have thought that any believed in Paul

as an object of faith. On the other hand, they might easily have thought that those whom Paul baptized became his disciples.

And this point of view as to discipleship helps us to understand why all through the Acts baptism was always in the Name of Jesus Christ, or the Lord Jesus, and never in the Name of the Trinity. Again, it is a question of **discipleship**. The all important matter in those early days was the Name of Christ, and for people to declare themselves His disciples. It would be incongruous to speak of being disciples of the Trinity, or disciples of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. We do not affirm for a moment that the formula of Matt. XXVIII. 19 was omitted, but since it is never once mentioned, and Christ's Name only is used, we have sufficient proof that baptism is connected with discipleship, for we are disciples of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It may also have amounted to the recognition that Jesus was God, and that baptism in His Name carried with it that of Father, Son and Holy Ghost. "He that acknowledges the Son hath the Father also." (I. John II. 23.)

If any further corroboration of what we have been insisting upon were necessary it is surely found in the commission of Matt. XXVIII. 19/20. This is an outstanding Scripture; quite different from Mark XVI. 16, on the one hand, and is in contrast with the silence of both Luke and John, on the other. How does it run?

"Go ye therefore and teach all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

As is generally known a different rendering appears in the margin for the word "teach." The alternative is "make disciples or Christians of all nations." Or again

“discipleize.” Thus we see how distinctly baptism is bound up with **discipleship**. The command does **not** run “Go and preach the gospel to all the world, but baptize only those who truly believe.”

No one, of course, would suggest that our Lord meant that baptism was to be administered to **everyone** indiscriminately, even to those who did not want it. No one supposes that. Some disposition to become a disciple would be necessary, of course. Nevertheless, nothing is said about the **actual state** required of those baptized. It is of vital importance to remember this. The whole meaning and place of water baptism has become distorted and misunderstood, simply because the subjects of it have become the paramount consideration and not the rite itself. There would be preaching and teaching, and disciples (learners) would be baptized. And they would be baptized not **because** they already possessed everything that Christianity had to offer, but with a view to possession—even to the possession of all that is involved “in the Name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” Baptism always has a forward look.

Baptism, as we have seen, does not in Scripture stand connected with what is inward or with a work of God within. It is an initiatory rite into an outward sphere of blessing. It does not, on the one hand, confer inward spiritual blessing, constituting the subject a real child of God, as the Romanist and Ritualist teach; nor, on the other, is it merely the outward expression of what has already taken place in the soul, or the public confession of being a child of God, as the Baptist supposes. Both are equally wrong. The truth lies between these two extremes. It gives the recipient a standing he did not possess before. He becomes a Christian by profession, or, as one might say, potentially. If this were only recognised it would

be an immense gain. People would not then be inclined to settle down as if everything were accomplished and an end had been reached, as is, alas! so often the case where Baptism is represented as an outward token of something already possessed—a backward look instead of a forward.

“Baptism doth also now save us.” It stands in relation to the real possession of Christianity somewhat as a five pound note stands in relation to the actual gold represented. The five pound note might conceivably be worth no more than paper and printing. It is merely **in itself** a promissory note. If there were no funds in the Bank of England the note which promises payment would be valueless. In itself, it merely **represents** five pounds. It is not the actual five pounds. So with Water Baptism. It represents something. It represents, so to speak, what is promised. But payment is made only on **conditions**. What is stored up in Christ—what is available through His Name—in other words what is offered in that three-fold Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit must be accepted in faith, or baptism fails of its object—it remains a form and nothing more. In itself it is not the **gold**. But baptism is the warrant which ensures payment if it is not treated as a dead letter. *

The story is told of a pensioner who had fought in the American Civil War, that he had never made use of the document in his possession which had been given to him by the American Government, and, consequently, he never enjoyed the pension to which he was entitled. When he died, the certificate was found tied round his neck. So with Baptism. It leaves the individual where he was as to any inward and spiritual change (only more responsible) unless there is faith to make good all the potentialities placed within his reach now he has been baptized.

*In other words, baptism in Scripture is frequently identified with what it represents. Just as men speak of the triumphs of a nation's flag, or of the power of the pen or sword. It is in what they represent.

The baptism answers to the paper and the printing, **with a name attached**, of the five pound note.

But in the light of Scripture it would be altogether wrong to suppose that Baptism makes **no** difference. From one point of view, it makes all the difference possible. Verses 29 to 30 of Luke VII. tell us that. There we read with reference to John's baptism:

“And all the people that heard him and the publicans, **justified God**, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, (margin: frustrated within themselves) being not baptized of him.”

Although this refers to John's baptism, there is no difference **in principle** between then and now, as to the points we are considering. In baptism a man is put in his true place before God. He justifies God, Who has pronounced judgment upon all flesh. Whatever may be his inward state, baptism is the acknowledgment that he **has** no hope in himself whatever, but only in the One God has raised from the dead. What Baptism signifies in itself is not determined by the amount of intelligence on the part of the baptized; nor even by his spiritual condition.

IV. The Teaching of Scripture as to Water Baptism.

Let us now consider some of the main passages in the Acts and epistles which refer to this important subject. And will the reader carefully consider whether what has already been said harmonizes with the plain teaching of Scripture.

Acts II. 38. “Then Peter said unto them, 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. For the promise

is unto you, and to your children Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”

Now, will the reader who is accustomed to a certain line of thought in regard to the rite of baptism, pause and seriously ask himself, whether such a passage as this favours the views he has been accustomed to think Scriptural. Here, those who had listened to Peter's discourse and had been pricked in their hearts, are told distinctly to be baptized, not because their sins were forgiven, but “for (or “unto”) the remission of sins.” Not because they had received the Holy Ghost, but in order to receive Him. And they are baptized in view of some promise. Now, does this at all resemble what are commonly known as Baptist views? Such views, and the teaching of no less a person than the apostle Peter, to whom had been entrusted the Keys of the Kingdom, are diametrically opposed!

For the apostle might just as easily have said—the peculiar conditions of the time would have afforded no insuperable obstacle—he might just as easily have said: “Repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and receive remission of sins, and when you have given evidence of your salvation and that you have received the gift of the Holy Ghost, come and be baptized.” He said nothing of the kind. It is clear, therefore, that the Apostle Peter—the one who, so to speak, inaugurated Christianity—was **not** a Baptist.

Moreover, the words “Save yourselves from this untoward generation,” indicate the meaning and purpose of baptism. Baptism is before men. It has to do with a position on earth. We do not need baptism in order to go to **heaven**. This is where Romanists and Ritualists are all adrift. In the case we are considering, baptism

severed them outwardly from the nation guilty of the death of their Messiah, and brought them on to new ground entirely. Instead of rejecting Christ they publicly acknowledged Him. It severed them from the world, and brought them into the Christian company. And so we read in the very next verse: "They **continued** steadfastly in the Apostle's doctrine and fellowship," etc. They needed no other introduction. Baptism was the door of entrance to the Christian company. Baptism signifies a change of outward position, not a change of inward state.

Acts VIII. In this chapter we have a record of the baptism of two individuals—Simon Magus and the Ethiopian eunuch. It would hardly be possible to imagine a greater contrast than these two men present. Yet both were baptized. Simon was brought outwardly to the place where all Christian blessing might have become his had he exercised faith.

The other case is very different. What Simon's feelings were we are not told, but of the eunuch it is recorded: "He went on his way rejoicing." Whether Philip ever said to him: "If thou believest with all thine heart thou mayest" is more than doubtful, for no modern translator accepts these words as genuine. At some later period in the history of the Church, when perhaps error as to the Person of Christ had to be resisted, candidates for baptism may have been required to make some such confession as is put into the mouth of the eunuch. But not only is such a confession never referred to elsewhere in Scripture but it does not fit the context. Everything turns upon the Scripture he was reading—a passage referring to what Christ suffered at the hands of men; and the quotation ends with the words: "His life is taken from the earth." The eunuch wishes to identify himself with

this. It harmonizes perfectly with Col. II. 11/12. "Circumcised with the circumcision made without hands . . . by the circumcision (cutting off) of Christ: buried with him **in baptism** wherein also ye are risen with Him." Which meant "dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world," and, "Being then risen with Christ seek those things which are above." (Chap. II. 20 and III. 1.). No wonder the eunuch went on his way rejoicing: his "life hid with Christ in God." His baptism signified this. Let us hope he ever remained true to it.

Acts X. 47. "Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?"

Now if baptism is to be regarded as a command of the Lord Jesus to the baptized (for this is the way in which it is often presented) does such a conception quite tally with the above question? Is any man justified in forbidding another to do what the Lord has commanded? But if, on the other hand, the command was given to the baptizer, and if baptism was the rite whereby people were associated publicly with the Christian company, then we can understand Peter's question. As a matter of fact, we find in the next chapter that serious objections were raised to what Peter had done. Some objected to Gentiles being placed on an equal footing with those of the circumcision. Peter was apprehensive that this might be the case, yet he did not hesitate, but commanded these Gentile converts to be "baptized in the Name of the Lord."* For this now was the true circumcision. In baptism all distinctions after the flesh were renounced, and henceforth Jew and Gentile were one body, one new man, with equal rights and privileges. (Eph. II. 13/22.)

* Receiving into the Christian Company as a visible body on earth is the responsibility of those already there. Baptism is the rite by which induction is made.

Nor does what took place in the house of Cornelius quite fit in with the ordinary views regarding Believers' Baptism. What need was there, after people had received the Holy Ghost, and given such a demonstration of it by speaking with tongues and magnifying God, for water baptism to be administered as a confession of their faith, or as a witness to what had taken place?

Acts XIX. 1/6. Here we see that everything depends upon the Name and **unto** what we are baptized. Yet there are those who seem to regard the Name as of secondary importance—indeed, of hardly any importance at all—for they regard immersion (the mode) and the condition of the one baptized as of all importance, and if their requirements in these respects are not met they insist upon the rite being performed a second time. The Name and “unto what” counts for less than the mode. Anything that more savors of irreverence (though not intended) it would be hard to conceive. The words “unto what” show us very clearly the meaning and intention of Baptism.

Acts XXII. 16. “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” This Scripture has already been considered, but let the question be pressed home once more: “Is this how the reader has been taught to regard water baptism?” Has he ever connected with it the thought of **washing**? Where is there any idea of **washing** in Believer's Baptism?

Some have tried to dispose of the difficulty by suggesting that the form of the words had its application only to Saul and to no one else, and has become obsolete. Not only is there not a word to suggest this, but one of the fundamental ideas in connection with baptism is the thought of washing, as we have seen. Why is water used,

except to indicate this? Is not one of the primary uses of water to cleanse? How peculiar! to use water in baptism, and call it Water Baptism, and yet eliminate from it the idea of washing. Does not this fact alone show how far some have wandered from the truth? We have never met a Baptist yet who could explain this text. Their idea is that Baptism represents or indicates something already accomplished—already true—they do not understand that Baptism cleanses from a former condition of life and brings the baptized on to new ground.

Let us turn now to the epistles where we may expect to find definite teaching as to the rite of Baptism.

Romans VI. is an outstanding chapter in this connection.

The apostle has stated in the previous chapter that “where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.” He then raises the question: “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” And he answers it by saying “How shall we that are dead (or, “have died”) to sin live any longer therein?” But when did we die to sin? Some would answer: “When we believed, and we are baptized to show it.” But this is not the answer given by the writer of Romans VI. And we are therefore confronted with this serious position: Are we to believe what the apostle says, or what somebody else says?

Here is what Romans VI. teaches us:

“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.”

We quote from the A.V. But as is well known the pronoun **eis** is used, and therefore “unto” is to be preferred to “into.” See Acts XIX. 3 and I Cor. X. 2.

But apart from Greek altogether, is not the English plain enough? so plain indeed that no reasonable unprejudiced mind can misunderstand it. Not a word is said about having died as believers, or that baptism represents something which has already taken place. On the contrary, Baptism has to do with a place taken by us. “As many of us as were **baptized** unto Jesus Christ, were **baptized** unto His death.” And again, “Buried with Him by **baptism** unto death.” And all with a view to what is to be true of us, not as representing what is true already.

It has been said, and repeatedly asserted, that the believer has died with Christ, and therefore he needs to be buried. This entirely reverses the order of verse 4. There it says, “We are **buried** with Him by baptism unto **death.**” “Buried with Him by baptism.”* Baptism in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ signifies this. We are baptized in view of Christ’s death, and so as His death meant death to sin (v. 10) we are to reckon ourselves dead unto sin. All is founded upon what is signified by the rite of baptism. And the apostle concludes by saying: “Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereto ye were delivered” (margin). Would that this could be said of every baptized person.

I. Cor. X. 1/2. Here the apostle states, referring to Israel: “All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”

* Could any words state more clearly that the *immersion* is in the rite itself—immersed into Christ and into His death—not a word said as to immersed in water. Water in Scripture is never a symbol of death and burial, but, on the contrary, of life: “Living Water”: “Water of Life,” etc.

This inspired record is dismissed by some with the trite remark: "This is **national** baptism." To what lengths will not people go in order to justify themselves and their preconceived ideas! Have they ever asked themselves the simple question: What purpose could possibly be served by a mere introduction of so-called **national** baptism, and as having no reference to Christianity? It evidently serves no purpose at all in the eyes of those who thus speak of it. Yet the Apostle is addressing Christians. Moreover, with this chapter he commences an unfolding of principles in relation to the House of God and the Body of Christ. In a series of chapters we have statements relating to the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper; also to ministry both in regard to God's people and the Gospel. (Chaps. X-XV.)

Baptism is placed at the very forefront of all this, and is introductory to what follows. Yet the whole meaning and purport of this is discounted by politely bowing it out of court, with the profound (?) utterance "This is national baptism"!! As much as to say, "It doesn't apply to us, it is merely some historical reference which the apostle saw fit to introduce, but we need take no further notice of it." And yet, as we have intimated, it stands related to all that follows, and is part and parcel of what the apostle has to say as to the functions of the Church on earth.

The apostle declares that **all** passed through the sea, and were **all** baptized—men, women and **children**; he draws no distinction. Others try to get rid of this difficulty (for it does not at all accord with their notions) by saying the children were typical, and represent true children of God, sheltered by the blood and born again. But the children, be it observed, are not specifically men-

tioned. How can something which is **unmentioned** become a type?

Moreover, a few verses lower down the inspired writer does refer to figures and types, verses 6 and 11. But not with any special reference to children.

No. Fidelity to truth compels us to face this passage with the sincere desire to profit by it, not with the determination to either ignore it or misrepresent it.

The apostle commences by saying, "I would not that **ye** should be ignorant." He is evidently saying something of first-class importance, and he is addressing Christians, and this, too, about Baptism. "All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea."

Here the apostle distinctly and emphatically, without any beating about the bush, calls this baptism. And the whole context shows that he does so with reference to its bearing upon Christians. No passage could give us clearer light as to the meaning and significance of the rite.*

First, it certainly had not to do with the inward state of the people. It does not say they were all true believers, and the subsequent account of them, after their baptism, proves they were not.

Second, it shows that the important matter in Baptism is not some prescribed mode from which there must on no account be any deviation. For though they passed through the sea, as a matter of fact, no water actually touched them. Thirdly, the baptism was with a view to the future. They "were all baptized unto Moses in the

* Another has said, "I. Cor. X. contains the essential idea of Christian Baptism."

cloud and in the sea.” The cloud spoke of guidance, and the sea of death. They all, men, women and children, were completely separated from Egypt, and came under the leadership of Moses. Henceforth they were to obey his direction—the one who spoke to them on behalf of God. Lastly, their baptism introduced them to certain privileges. “They did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink.” It need hardly be said that there is no suggestion here of the Lord’s Supper. The point is Baptism as introductory to a new condition.

The apostle does not hesitate to speak of the passage of the Red Sea as baptism, for it indicates in the most striking way its meaning and intention. Let us repeat the four points just mentioned. 1. It is no question of inward state, for these baptized people turned back in their hearts into Egypt, and for other reasons were overthrown in the wilderness. With many of them God was not well pleased.

2. The essential point is not some prescribed mode or the apostle could never have said that Israel was baptized. 3. Baptism is with a view to the future, “unto Moses.” 4. It introduces to outward privilege. Thus I. Cor. X. 1/2 is one of the most illuminating passages we know on the subject we are considering. One lesson which seems to permeate Scripture is that God cannot be with man on the ground of what he is in himself, and this is indicated by an external rite. Before those heavenly strangers visited Abraham we read of **circumcision**—the cutting off of the flesh (Comp. Gen. XVII. and XVIII.) Before the man “with the sword drawn in his hand” could take his place as “Captain of the host of the Lord,” we read of all the children of Israel born in the wilderness being circumcised. (Joshua V.) And it is the same in principle

at the Red Sea. It was only after they crossed the Sea that God took His place amongst them. In this respect Baptism has taken the place of circumcision.

Galatians III. 27. Here we read: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Now let the reader again ask himself whether, had he been writing upon the subject, he would have expressed his ideas quite in this way. "Baptized into (or unto) Christ," where has the Baptist any place for this? His idea is that only those who are **already** in Christ should be baptized. But there is not a word to that effect in the passage quoted. The language is plain and unmistakable: "**Baptized** unto Christ." From the point of view of many brethren it is impossible to attach any meaning to these words at all. In the previous verse we are told we "are all the sons (not children) of God **by faith**," therefore we are not made sons by Baptism. But in the verse we are looking at it is baptism and not faith. That is, the vital relationship is a matter of faith, but where it is a question of outward profession it is Baptism: "As many of you as have been baptized unto Christ have put on Christ." There is the outward as well as the inward. It is the putting on of Christ, in an outward way.* The flesh and all that belongs to it is disowned. It is the ground taken **in Baptism**.

Thus we see Paul is no more a Baptist than Peter. He speaks of what Baptism does, and of what is true of those who have been baptized.

Colossians II. 11/12 and I. Pet. III. 21/2.

These passages have already received a passing reference, and therefore it is necessary to add but a few words.

* That is, the public acceptance of the fact that man after the flesh has no standing. Jew and Gentile, as such, are no longer recognised.

That in this first passage there is a distinct connection between circumcision and baptism seems evident. Yet there are those who dispute it. They seem disposed to separate baptism from all that has gone before. But Christianity cannot be looked at apart from all that has preceded it. Much could be said by way of illustrating this point. The Lord's Supper cannot be looked upon entirely apart from the Passover. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast" (the feast of **unleavened bread**). This passage also teaches us that the sacrifice Christ offered is to be regarded, to a certain extent, at least, in the light of the earlier sacrifices. It is not otherwise with water baptism.

In this connection will the reader please pay careful attention to the words used in Col. II. 11. The apostle is not referring simply to circumcision as an Old Testament rite, but in its spiritual aspect; and let it be noticed, he applies it directly and emphatically to Christians. He is not thinking of Jews. His language is: "In Whom also **ye** are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the flesh ("sins" should be omitted) by the circumcision of Christ." Here the **truth** of circumcision is used in its application to Christians. Christ was "cut off." As regards the flesh He was put to death. Nothing came to Him on that ground. Everything becomes His in resurrection. And the apostle affirms that this has its application to believers: "In Whom also ye are circumcised." But how? By actual circumcision, with knives? No. In Baptism! "Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein (or "in whom") also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead."

It would be strange, with such a close parallel drawn between circumcision and baptism, if they had nothing

in common. Now what was the meaning of circumcision? Romans IV. 11 tells us. Abraham received the **sign** of circumcision, a **seal** of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised'. Ah! exclaims our Baptist friend, "that is it," it was the seal of something he already possessed." But wait a little. Before ever Abraham was circumcised God had said to him:

"Thou shalt keep My covenant therefore, thou and thy seed after thee in their generation. This is My covenant, which ye shall keep between Me and you and thy seed after thee. Every man **child** among you shall be circumcised. And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin: and it shall be a **token of the covenant betwixt me and you.**"

Circumcision was therefore a "sign" a "token," and it applied not merely to a grown-up person, who had exercised faith, like Abraham, but to children. We read, Abraham was ninety years old, Ishmael thirteen, and Isaac was only eight days. Now if this **principle** (it is not a question of detail) was not intended to apply in the case of water baptism, will those who say so, furnish the Scripture where this is clearly stated. They cannot do it. And as someone has put it: "No text and therefore no change."

That the real benefits of Baptism, that of which it is a sign and token, do not become ours apart from faith, is true. But this was also true of circumcision. Romans II. 21/9, gives us clear instruction on the point. It says:

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh, but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and

not in the letter whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

All this may be said with equal truth of Christianity and the baptized. He is not a Christian (that is, in the full sense of the word) who is one outwardly (though made so **outwardly** by baptism) but he is a Christian who is one **inwardly**. Yet water baptism and what it signifies are often represented in Scripture as one. The Baptism stands for the thing signified, quite apart, for the time being, from whether the baptized is actually in the benefit of the blessings indicated. How strange that this is sometimes not only overlooked but strenuously denied, and the whole conception of baptism is reversed. That is, something is supposed to be already true of the individual who is a candidate for baptism and he undergoes the rite of baptism because of that. Scripture presents the matter from the opposite end, namely, as the token of all the blessings placed within the reach of the one baptized.

This becomes additionally clear on a reference to what the apostle Peter has to say in the third chapter of his first epistle, where, speaking of Noah, he tells us “eight souls were saved by water.” And then he adds: “**The like figure** whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.”

In what way was Noah saved? Was he brought on to a renewed earth and blessed (for the first thing we read is: “God blessed Noah and his sons”) and was the new covenant which became the guarantee of security given to him, and then after that was he saved by water? The reader will at once say, “Of course not; how ridiculous to think of such a thing! he was saved by water first and then brought into the blessing.” Precisely. Yet the extraordinary thing is that while baptism is said to be “a

like figure” there are those who stoutly maintain that the salvation is accomplished first, and baptism comes after!!*

No! the opposite is true. Noah was saved by water, in that it was the means of his escape from a doomed world under judgment, and brought on to a renewed earth. The water closed one order of things and introduced him to another. And it is important to notice that here “saving” is ascribed to the water, not to the ark, though, of course, he could not have been saved apart from the ark.

So there is no eternal salvation apart from new birth and personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, Peter can affirm, without hesitation or equivocation of any kind, that baptism **saves**. How does it save? It brings us into **outward** relationship with One Who has died and risen and entered a new scene. All that is involved in the stupendous fact that Christ is risen and gone into heaven becomes available to us, for we are baptized in His Name. One essential feature of Baptism is that we are immersed into a new condition. Just as water, in the case of Noah, closed one order and introduced to another, so a new world is opened to the Baptized person. And what a world it is! What possibilities are within the reach of the one “saved by water.” The apostle sums it up in these words: “Jesus Christ, Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him.”

What Peter writes in his epistle must be interpreted by what he said on the Day of Pentecost. “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

* We came across this extraordinary pronouncement the other day, by an otherwise intelligent man. “Baptism saves because it is the saved who are baptized.” If anyone can make sense of this he must be very clever.

Holy Ghost.” Could they have received these blessings had they refused baptism? Or would they have possessed a good conscience? The effort completely to alter the original character of Peter’s message is entirely unjustified. Yet there are those who insist on turning everything topsy turvy, putting the cart before the horse, denying that baptism saves, insisting that a good conscience is possessed beforehand and virtually affirming that Noah was saved by water **after** he had reached the new earth. One thing is perfectly certain. If the coming of the Holy Ghost, consequent upon the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ to the right hand of God, was the introduction of Christianity, then Water Baptism, which is one of the ordinances of Christianity, cannot mean something quite opposite to-day to what it meant on the Day of Pentecost.

How unaccountably strange, that a theory of Water Baptism obtains, and is held most tenaciously, which not only finds no place in the New Testament, where the doctrine is clearly enforced, but is often absolutely contrary to what is there stated. I. Cor. x. 1-2, is either left severely alone, or an interpretation is placed upon it which is merely an effort to prove that it has no real relation to Christian Baptism, nor Christian Baptism to it. Yet the very place it occupies and the context show that the two have the closest relation.

The same remark applies to Acts xxii., 16, where “**be baptized** and wash away thy sins,” presents the same difficulty. Baptists have no place for it. Romans vi., 3-4, is turned upside down, for it states that we are “buried with Him (Christ) **by Baptism** into (or unto) death.” Not, as some would teach, that already having died therefore we are to be buried, but the very opposite. We are put out of sight in order to be **dead**, and to “walk

in newness of life.” Not baptized because we have been walking in newness of life. Nor, as we have seen, does the view expressed by the apostle Peter, any more than that expressed by Paul, find any place in what is commonly known as the Baptist view. How is this to be accounted for? It cannot be accounted for, except in one way, namely, that the views that have grown up around what is called “Believers’ Baptism” and the teaching of Scripture are not in agreement.

V. Water Baptism. Its mode.

A consideration of the mode comes next in importance to the meaning, if for no other reason than that with some everything is made to depend upon it. They take their stand upon the dictum: “No immersion; no Baptism.” So serious has this matter become that those who have not been immersed are declared not to have been baptized (although the Holy Name of the Trinity has been pronounced upon them) and are urged to be immersed. Such is the position taken by otherwise godly brethren who profess moreover to have scriptural warrant for it.

To begin with, if this attitude means anything, it means this, that the measure of water and the method employed are of as much if not more importance than the Name in which it is done. If the candidate is not absolutely and entirely covered with the water, then the Holy Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost is of no account. To these believers the rite has no meaning, though done in the Name of the Trinity, and intended in the most solemn and sacred way to be the rite of baptism. Anything more serious, of its kind, would be impossible to conceive. And although such an attitude is **comparatively** of modern origin, dating back no further than the 12th Century (if so far as that) it is insisted

upon with as much zeal and pertinacity as if it could be upheld with all the authority of Holy Scripture.

Yet what are the actual facts. First, the word **baptizo** does not invariably mean “dip,” and this is one reason why the Greek form “**baptize**” was retained, not translated; and secondly, Scripture nowhere indicates that baptism was to be observed after one particular manner, much less does it ever insist that if this were departed from it could not be considered to be baptism. Let us consider these two points for a moment.

The word **baptizo** was not translated because the translators could not find an exact equivalent. Dr. Angus—President of the Baptist College, London—one of the (1881) Revisers, wrote, in answer to an enquiry as to why **baptize** and **baptism** were allowed to remain, that “Non-fidelity to what we deem truth is not part of the reason.” Any kind of **dipping** is not baptism, and there may be baptism without dipping. The Apostle Paul does not hesitate to call the passage of the Red Sea baptism, and this not merely as applying to Israel but in relating it to Christianity. Yet they were not dipped. Our Lord said, “I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished.” But was our Lord immersed? His baptism was in the **suffering** He passed through when all God’s waves and billows went over Him. But everyone recognises this as figurative. There were no **actual** waves and billows. So with Water Baptism. The Baptism—the immersion—is in what is signified, not in the particular mode in which the rite is performed. “Buried with Him” is the signification of the rite, and is not dependent upon the amount of water. If it were, then buried in water, or immersion in water to signify burial, is a curious symbol, seeing that

scarcely one in a million is buried in water. If so much was really intended to depend upon the symbol, surely one more apt, and one that bore a closer resemblance to burial, would have been employed. It is undeniable that the Apostle Paul associates "burial" with Baptism, and not directly with **water**. He does not say (as we might expect) "Buried with Him in water," but "Buried with Him by Baptism."* And the word he uses does not necessarily mean "dip" or "immerse." A further proof that the word does not of itself convey the idea of immersion is found in the fact that it is used in connection with the Holy Ghost. "John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." The Holy Ghost "**sat upon** each of them," and "**filled** them," yet the one is said to be baptism just as much as the other.

And this brings us to the second point; viz.: does Scripture specify the exact mode in which the rite is to be administered? And the answer is an emphatic, No. As Mr. Tyeth Hart in his **Paroleipomena** says,

"God has seen it best not to give us a definite prescription of baptismal procedure. His reason why appears not difficult to find when we remember the old maxim, that 'the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.' With this for our guiding star we may be safe in saying that the form is not prescribed, lest formalism should triumph over spirituality."

Thus Paul designates that "baptism" where the water was a wall unto them on the right and on the left, but no immersion took place. Our Lord uses the term without any

* There is not the slightest evidence, either in Romans or Colossians that the purpose of the Apostle was to teach a *mode* of Baptism. His words do not even imply that *dipping* was the apostolic mode. To insist upon a particular mode is to fall into the very ritualism the Apostle is contending against.

thought of **actual** immersion: the baptism consisted in the suffering. Ananias can say to Saul, "Arise, and be baptized," without a word as to the mode.* That sufficient water was at hand to **immerse him** is hardly likely. On the Day of Pentecost, the day which marked the inauguration of Christianity, and when we might have expected explicit instructions as to mode and method and the exact ritual appertaining to the rite of Baptism (if that had been the all important thing) Peter is absolutely silent on these points. In Acts X. we do not find that same apostle directing that Cornelius and his friends should be taken to the sea to be baptized, though the sea was near. Does not the Greek indicate that Peter implied "can any man forbid water to be brought?" (Alford).

Surely all this weight of evidence goes to show that the essence of the matter is in the rite itself and in its signification, not in the mode, whether by sprinkling, pouring or immersion. And this in spite of the confident assertion once made by an ardent Baptist, one Dr. Carson, that "in all the realm of Greek literature **baptizo** means dip and nothing but dip, always expressing mode." It has been proved again and again that this statement has no more foundation than others used to support certain theories of Baptism. He was confounding baptizo with bapto.

A friend of ours recently had the following experience, on the occasion of baptizing several persons. During the preliminaries, owing to a leakage, much of the water had disappeared ere the ceremony of actual immersion took place. What was he to do? A certain amount of water remained, but not sufficient to immerse those to be bap-

* The word "Arise" implies, if anything, that he stood up and was baptized standing, water being poured upon the head. "In both passages the Greek word for 'arise' is *avastas*, which translated exactly would be 'having stood up' be baptized" (*Axtell*).

tized. What would the reader have done under these circumstances? My friend proceeded to administer the rite of baptism though not by immersion. Surely all will agree he pursued the proper course, and that the persons were truly baptized.

In the fact that no particular method is prescribed, do we not see the wisdom and foresight of Scripture, for Christianity is universal in its appeal? In our own country, girdled by the sea, and containing unbounded supplies of water, no difficulty arises as to providing sufficient quantity of water for immersion, but this is far from being the case in many localities on the earth's surface. Whatever be the reason, the fact remains that never once, whether it is John's Baptism or Christian Baptism, are any instructions given as to method. Yet to-day there are those who not only insist upon a certain mode, but give it such a place of pre-eminence that nothing else counts, if baptism is not administered according to a particular form. Such literalism is on a par with the views of those who insist that it is necessary to have unleavened bread at the Lord's Supper and unfermented wine, and that it must be partaken of in the evening. All such formalism is absolutely foreign to the very nature of Christianity. Christianity is in "the spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God." "Burial" is inherent in the rite of Baptism itself quite apart from the amount of water used.*

* As has been said: "In baptism it is not the immersion into water that is the primary thing, but immersion into a new condition—an entire change of outward condition. This is involved in the rite whether performed by sprinkling or otherwise. The Greek form which means *into* water is never once used in connection with Baptism."—*I. Stockton Axtell*. Baptism means immersion though not into water but into a new condition. John said: "I indeed baptize you *with* water" not *into* water. Moreover, in the Greek the word used for baptism (baptizo) implies leaving the article in the liquid (as in dyeing) for an indefinite period, until its character was changed. Is this done when people are immersed? The Didache (about 100 A.D.) distinctly states that the ceremony was performed by pouring the water upon the head."—*Ibid.*

VI. Baptism introductory to an Outward Sphere of Blessing and Privilege.

This raises a question of the utmost importance—a question which is bound up in the most intimate way with Water Baptism. Is there an outward place of privilege?

Was there such a place under the Jewish system? Surely there is only one answer and that answer is not only provided for us in the Old Testament but confirmed in the New. Take the following statement in Romans IX.: “Who are Israelites, to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, etc.” All this appertained to Israel as Israel, quite apart from spiritual condition. Every circumcised descendant of Abraham had part in all this. (v.v. 4/5.) Were they not all partakers of “the root and fatness of the Olive tree,” according to Chap. XI.? Does not the Olive Tree represent an outward sphere of blessing and privilege? All who enjoyed such privileges as have been mentioned were not necessarily truly converted to God. Far otherwise, or why were they broken off?

If then the figure of the Olive tree represents an external sphere of privilege in regard to the Jews, how can it represent something else when applied to the Gentiles? For the apostle goes on to tell us that the Gentiles are grafted in among them. And, moreover, the latter are threatened with the same penalty as befel the Jews, if they do not continue in God’s goodness. It is in both cases a question of the goodness of God in an external sphere of privilege.

From this point of view, the question of human responsibility is involved; as to whether those who have outwardly been brought into a place of privilege avail themselves of these external advantages. In other words,

whether they stand by faith, or are cut off. For these solemn words are used of Gentiles and apply to-day: "For if God spared not the natural branches (the Jews), take heed lest He spare not thee (Gentiles)." How can we think for a moment, with such words before us, that what was true of the Olive Tree in reference to the Jews, is not true in reference to the Gentiles? Although the blessing and privileges may be of a different order, yet in both cases the Olive Tree has to do with an outward place of testimony and privilege, and therefore with the responsibility of those who are in it.

But let us look at the matter a little closer. What happened on the day of Pentecost?

The House of God was formed on the day of Pentecost. And while this was composed of real material at the beginning, it soon became otherwise. Paul says, "grievous wolves shall enter in among you." How could this be done if there is no outward sphere? And Jude refers to certain men who "crept in unawares." Crept in where? It does not mean crept into the world, and they can't creep into the Body of Christ, nor into the true Church. There must be an outward sphere into which they creep, for they are not true believers, but "ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness," yet found amongst believers and setting up as teachers.

The addresses to the seven churches (Rev. II. and III.) imply that this outward sphere exists. "Thou hast **there** them that hold the doctrine of Balaam." This to Pergamos. And to Thyatira worse still. "Thou sufferest that woman Jezebel . . . to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols." The seriousness of the matter—indeed, the whole point of it—is that all this, and a great deal more,

was taking place in the outward and visible Church, not in the world as such, as the other addresses tell us.

The Apostle Paul draws attention to the same fact in I. Cor. III. On the one hand, he can speak of those who were "God's husbandry" and "God's building," but, on the other, of those who built upon the foundation he had laid—Jesus Christ—but built with material that would not stand the test—wood, hay, stubble. This would be burned, though the workman himself might be saved. Yet there was something still more serious. Those within who defiled, or destroyed, the temple of God. These would themselves be destroyed.

Surely enough has been said to prove the point we are insisting upon. But in addition, the truth we have stated finds ample and complete corroboration in some of our Lord's parables.

In the parable of the marriage of the King's son five classes are mentioned. Of those to whom the first invitation was sent it is simply stated "They would not come." In regard to the second, there were those who "made light of it," but another class "entreated the King's servants spitefully and slew them." But there was a third invitation, and there was a response, and "the wedding was furnished with guests." These represent class number four.

And now a curious thing happens; something indeed for which we are quite unprepared. Will the reader ask himself, why the Lord thought it necessary to indicate another class—the man without a wedding garment? In some respects the whole story seems to lead up to this climax. What does it mean?

Here is one who cannot be classed amongst those who would not come; nor amongst those who made light of it, and certainly he was not one who spitefully entreated the King's servants. The King addresses him as "Friend." Yet he differs from the other guests in one essential particular—he had not on a wedding garment. The very mention of him—the way he is picked out from all the rest, and his tragic end—all tell us that our Lord wishes to convey to us some very important truth. Here is one in an outward place of privilege. He is as much there, from one point of view, as any of the others. How could this be unless there is some outward sphere? This from one aspect is precisely what the Kingdom of Heaven is—an external place of privilege on earth. For the Kingdom of Heaven, it need hardly be said, is not Heaven. And all this applies to the present day. Alas! there are hundreds and thousands of professing Christians without the "wedding garment."

Is not the fact we are dwelling upon further elucidated in the parable of the ten virgins in Matt. XXV? The company represented by these virgins cannot be the outside world. Nor do they represent Jews. They "**went forth** to meet the Bridegroom." Jews **as such** were never called to go forth anywhere. They were confined within a fold. Moreover, the great distinguishing feature of the parable is the oil—the Holy Spirit. Here again we are not on Jewish ground. The parable finds its answer in the present dispensation. That which distinguished the foolish virgins from the wise was the lack of oil. And Paul distinguishes the non-Christian from the real Christian in a similar way. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His."

But the point for our present consideration is, that, for the time being, both wise and foolish virgins were to-

gether, outwardly one company, and ostensibly on the same errand. Nor, regarded from an outward point of view, could anyone who might have seen them go forth have been able to distinguish the wise from the foolish. Outwardly there was no difference, even to falling asleep. Yet when a certain crisis arose there was all the difference imaginable. In the light of all this, how is it possible to say there is no external sphere of profession and privilege?

One more Scripture, and we have finished with this aspect of the case. How can Heb. X. 29 possibly be understood unless the fact of an outward sphere is accepted? The writer is referring to those who had made some profession of Christianity, but had turned from it. And this is how he speaks of them:

“Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, **wherewith he was sanctified**, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace.”

“Wherewith he was sanctified.” In what way was this individual sanctified? Surely everyone will agree that it does not refer to the inward sanctification which is true only of the child of God. This can refer only to an **outward** sanctification, and therefore **a place of outward privilege**. For the words quoted do not apply to the true believer—one who has repented and been born again. “He who despised Moses law,” the writer reminds us, “died without mercy,” and then goes on to say: “How much sorer punishment” will be the portion of the one he is referring to. How can this refer to the

true child of God, whose “sins are forgiven,” John tells us, “for His Name’s sake”?

Nor is such language applicable to the world in general. It must therefore apply to a **third** class belonging neither to the world, as such, nor to the true Body of Christ. It is conclusive therefore that they belonged merely to the outward sphere of Christianity.

In view of all that has been here said, what warrant is there for the statement, which appeared in a recent article in a well-known magazine, to the effect—“The external position is something so novel and unscriptural as to cause one to wonder that it could be seriously put forward.” We are certainly left “wondering” (to use the writer’s own phrase) how such a view as that just cited “could be seriously put forward.” We have given the reader an opportunity of judging for himself. It is into this outward sphere of unique privilege Baptism introduces us.

VII. Believers’ Baptism.

This idea, **as commonly presented and understood**, is fundamentally unsound, misleading and unscriptural. We do not, of course, suggest for a moment that when people believe they are not to be baptized, if the rite has never previously been administered. We are merely dealing here with views common to those who hold what is termed “Believers’ Baptism.” In this connection it is as we have described it, for three reasons at least. 1. Neither the expression, nor what it is often made to stand for, is ever once found in Scripture. 2. It is supposed to represent something already true of the one baptized. Which is like putting the cart before the horse; and is entirely opposed, as we have already seen, to passage after passage in the New Testament. 3. It connects baptism

with a **supposed** inward work in the believer. Now in Scripture Water Baptism rests upon nothing **supposed**, nor does it stand in relation to what has already taken place **in** a person, but has to do with a change of **outward** position, and is the introduction to the sphere of **profession** where the Lordship of Christ is owned. As we have seen, when Scripture speaks of believers it does not necessarily mean true believers, and therefore how can Believers' Baptism (meaning real believers) be deduced from it?

Is it any wonder, when people start on such a wrong tack, that they never arrive at the truth? Three of the main passages of Scripture relied upon, which are supposed to countenance these views, are Mark XVI. 16; Acts VIII. 37; and XVIII. 8. Let us consider these texts seriatim.

Mark XVI. 16. To begin with, the **command** here is to the Apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel, and there is no **command**, as such, to be baptized. It is thus in keeping with the rest of Scripture which connects the responsibility with the baptizer. It is something he does to the person baptized, not something the baptized can do for himself. Therefore, how can the command be to the latter? Mark XVI. is in keeping with Matt. XXVIII.

Next, no one who accepts the Baptist view would ever think of placing the words in the order found in Mark XVI. 16. Let the reader ask himself this question: What opinion would one, who had never met with this passage before, and had no preconceived ideas on the subject of baptism, form from it? Would he not conclude that Water Baptism was **in some way** (he might not exactly know how, at first) bound up with salvation? Could he possibly

conclude that a person is saved in every sense first, and baptized after to show that he is saved? “He that believeth **and is baptized** shall be saved.” Is not this precisely the way, in at least three recorded instances, in which the Apostle Peter presents the matter? (Acts II., X. and I. Pet. III.).

Acts VIII. 37. (“If thou believest with all thine heart, etc.”). There is every reason to believe that these words have been interpolated, and consequently, they are not treated as Scripture by any modern translator, however devout and learned he may be. Yet we were surprised to notice it was quoted the other day by the editor of a religious paper as though no question had ever been raised as to its authenticity. Is this honest? Let us hope it is due to ignorance and nothing more. There are both external and internal reasons why it should be rejected.

But even if it were authentic, it does not prove the Baptist case. We do not **baptize anyone** who comes along. It still leaves the question open, Why was he baptized? We must go to other Scriptures for teaching as to this. And the answer is definite and unequivocal, as we have seen. He was baptized because by baptism his outward position and status were altogether changed. And surely it is well, in view of the curious theories about, to ponder what Philip did **not** say as well as what he is supposed to have said. He did not say “I baptize you **as** a believer”: or, “I baptize you as a confession of your faith,” or, “I baptize you in order that you may obey the command of your Lord.” The baptism of this Ethiopian is not related to any of these things. Through his baptism his outward position was changed, he was no longer a heathen but a Christian and a disciple of Christ. That is, outwardly and publicly before men.

Acts XVIII. 8. How triumphantly these words are quoted, as if they settled the question, and nothing more could be said: "Many of the Corinthians hearing, believed, and were baptized." "Hearing," "Believed," "Baptized." Here is the order, we are told. "Here is 'Believers' Baptism' and there is nothing else."

But not quite so quickly, please. It has yet to be shown what relation Baptism has to believing; and also, what believing effects, and what baptism effects. According to Baptists, water baptism is only another way of expressing a person's faith. A kind of reflection, nothing more. They do not realise that each may be looked at apart. Or, to put it rather crudely, each does a work of its own.

For instance, by faith we obtain forgiveness of sins and eternal life. Neither of these is obtained by Baptism. On the other hand, we are told in one place, "Baptism doth also now save us." Therefore, unless we are to believe that we need saving **twice over** and in precisely the same way, we are bound to believe (unless we **dis**-believe Scripture) that by Baptism we are saved in some other way, and consequently, that Water Baptism has not the limited connection and place which some people give it, but that it fulfils a purpose of its own.

For again, **believing** is what a person must do for himself, and which no one else can do on his behalf. But the very contrary is true of Baptism. This is something a person cannot do for himself, but which another must do for him. If but this single point were properly taken into account, would it not save many from the perverted views they sometimes hold? For why must there be a baptizer as well as a baptized? As a mere matter of **form** it is not **absolutely** necessary. Indeed, history records the case of

one who, believing he had not been properly baptized as an infant, and who could find no one at hand sharing his views to do it for him, baptized himself. But every reasonable person will pronounce this quite irregular and quite unscriptural. The rite can only be administered by another. No individual can, by his own act, appropriate the outward privileges into which baptism introduces. Thus the 3000 on the day of Pentecost did not baptize themselves, they were baptized; and immediately they were numbered amongst those already in the Church. A man's faith alone does not admit him to Church fellowship; he has to be received.* Another proof that there must be an outward place of privilege. The rite of Baptism was not simply a public declaration of faith, it effected something which faith in itself could not effect. It had to do with man; not only with God, though it was done with and under the authority of the Lord. Thus Peter says in the house of Cornelius, "Can any **man** forbid water?" Here again it was a question of admitting these Gentiles into the outward place of privilege on earth on an equal footing with Jewish believers.

Is it not evident, then, that to deduce Believers' Baptism, as commonly understood, from the words "Hearing," "Believed," "Baptised" is entirely fallacious? To use an illustration which we have employed elsewhere, I may say to someone: A man entered an hotel tired and hungry and after a rest and a meal he went out. Now why did he go out? It might easily be supposed that he went out because he was refreshed. As a matter of fact, it was for a different reason altogether. He really went out because he had a very important engagement. Apply this to the matter in hand. "Hearing" and "believing" relate to one thing. Baptism stands in relation to some-

* Even letters of commendation are used with regard to those who are members of a local assembly, if visiting another neighbourhood.

thing else. Not simply to believing as some think, but to something **outside**, not to something within. Just as the man in our illustration did not go out to show a change had taken place in himself but for an external reason.

We now desire to present to the reader, in as few words as possible, the urgent reasons which exist for something in the nature of a full investigation of the teaching of Scripture on the subject of Water Baptism, such as is now before him. If Water Baptism is as important as some believe, then all the more reason why every one should know the truth about it, and not encumber it with false ideas.

It has been said, and we can confirm the truth of the statement, that "A most extraordinary confusion of mind and difference of opinion exist as to Water Baptism attested by Church history all down the ages." The true idea seems to lie in the mean between what is called Believers' Baptism, on the one hand, and extreme Ritualistic and Roman Catholic ideas, on the other. It is neither a confession of, nor a declaration of, something already possessed by the baptized; nor does its administration convey blessings which belong only to those who truly believe.

The late Dr. Dale of Birmingham (no mean judge) speaking for those with whom he was associated said: "There are probably very few subjects on which the common thought of intelligent and cultivated Congregationalists is so vague, indefinite and incoherent."

Can anything more favourable be said of Christians in general? Have we not seen already that even those who are called Baptists hold views which leave no room for some of the outstanding passages in the New Testament relating to the subject? The original significance of the

rite has become almost entirely obscured. Yet these erroneous ideas are propagated with a zeal deserving a better cause, and everywhere pressed on the attention of others as if some vital and most valuable truth was involved. Only this year (1936) article after article in various magazines, as well as pamphlet after pamphlet, have appeared; with the same mis-statements and unscriptural ideas repeated over and over again. Some of these we propose now to consider.

In a magazine article, one writer, well-known, states:

“We believe that baptism is a **figurative** (bold type ours) initiation into Christ: a symbolic washing away of sins (Acts XXII. 16); a figure of salvation by being found in Christ (I. Pet. III. 21); a putting on of Christ (Gal. III. 27); faith's open acceptance and confession of an inward union and association with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection. (Rom. VI. 4.)

In considering these statements, for a moment, it must be remembered that the one who makes them has in view only a true child of God, one born again, one already in Christ. Now, will the reader ask himself what possible end can be served by “a **figurative** initiation into Christ” when the one baptized is already supposed to be there? It is to be noticed that the author of this suggestion gives no Scripture reference to this particular point, though he does to the others. He would have difficulty in finding one. The very statement is self-contradictory. How can you be initiated into something which you already possess? Any dictionary will tell us that to initiate is to **introduce**. Is a Freemason accepted as such, and granted all the privileges of the order, and recognised as belonging to it, and is he, after that, initiated? That

Baptism is the rite of initiation into an outward sphere of privilege on earth, is shown to be the case by Acts II. and X. But that baptism is a **figurative** initiation into Christ of those already in Christ is an idea wholly foreign to the New Testament. Does not such an assertion only prove the absolute confusion of mind which exists about this subject to which we have already referred?

Let us consider the next statement:

“A symbolic washing away of sins,” and Acts XXII. 16 is quoted. Where in this passage is anything said as to a **symbolic** washing away of sins? The words are definite and explicit: “Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins.” The fact is, he is confounding one washing with another, and supposing there can be only one kind of washing, and that the one is symbolic of the other. It is an entire mistake. How can water be a symbol of blood? The two washings must be looked at apart. Saul of Tarsus had already been cleansed by the precious Blood of Christ. That was before God. Being baptized meant that he was taking a new position before **men**—publicly renouncing his former life and entering upon one entirely new, which was signified by his “calling on the Name of the Lord.” He publicly, in baptism, acknowledges as Lord the very One he had formerly persecuted. The water baptism was in no sense a symbol of the other cleansing, but meant that henceforth he would “walk in newness of life.” (Rom. VI.)

“A figure of salvation by being found in Christ.” We have not the least desire to speak offensively, or in exaggerated language, but, honestly, we can see neither meaning nor sense in this extraordinary combination of words. If the words “being found in Christ” refer to the safety of Noah and his family in the Ark, then the

writer of them misses the whole point of the Apostle Peter's reference to being 'saved through **water,**' of which baptism is a figure. How can **Water** Baptism refer to anything else but the water? It can have nothing to do with the ark, and therefore nothing to do with "a figure of salvation by being found in Christ." And if we are already "found in Christ," why do we need "a figure of salvation?" Really, as we proceed, these ideas seem to grow more and more extraordinary.

"A putting on of Christ." It is quite refreshing to meet with one statement, at least, we can agree with. But the writer here contents himself with quoting the words of Scripture. And if he means that in Baptism we "put on Christ," then we thoroughly agree, for Scripture says so.

We come now to the last statement, which is supposed to be the teaching of Rom. VI. 4. But where does this passage say that baptism is "faith's open acceptance and confession of an inward union and association with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection?" Such an interpretation is surely not in the least warranted by the text. To begin with, this makes baptism a backward instead of forward look. And next, the verse declares as plainly as language can that we are "baptized unto His death." And again, "We have been buried therefore with Him by baptism unto death ; with a view to something, even to "walk in newness of life."*

How are we to account for an intelligent believer not only holding, but advocating, such perverted ideas? The explanation is that people start with a preconceived idea which is not according to Scripture, and then try to make Scripture fit it. They made a wrong commencement, and

* Everyone knows that the Greck *eis* has, amongst other meanings—the force of 'unto'—i.e., towards, or in the direction of.

consequently can never reach a right conclusion. As we have already pointed out, they connect Water Baptism with what is supposed to be already true, or, in other words, with what is within, whereas in Scripture it stands in relation to what is **outward**,

But let us enquire a little further. There lies before us a booklet with the proud title, “The Truth Concerning Baptism.” But the illogical and unconvincing nature of this short treatise is manifest on the opening pages. It commences by drawing the attention of the believer to the solemn and binding character of our Lord’s commands, and proceeds immediately to make Water Baptism one of them. And then with strange irrelevancy quotes a command given to the apostles in Matt. XXVIII. 19 and Mark XVI. 15/16.

What can be clearer than that the **command** is to the apostles in both passages. And for a very simple reason as we have said. Water Baptism is something the baptizer does, and the responsibility is his.

So that this little treatise on “The **Truth** concerning Baptism” starts with a double error. It puts the believer in the legal position of obeying a command; and, moreover, calls upon him to obey a command which was given to someone else.

Let us hear what Mr. William Kelly, one of the greatest Biblical expositors connected with so-called Brethren, has to say on this very point.

“In Christendom and among Baptists in particular what is more prevalent than to reckon Baptism and the Lord’s Supper as His commands. But they are nothing of the kind A command puts things altogether in a wrong point of view. Christian Baptism is a favour conferred upon the soul on the author-

ity of the Lord Jesus. The Ethiopian asks, ‘What hindereth my being baptized?’ And Peter in the case of Cornelius, etc., says ‘Can any man forbid water?’ It would be strange to talk thus if it were a command. Who would think of hindering or forbidding a command of the Lord?”

To show how Scripture is strained and perverted in order to bolster up a theory, the writer of the book in question is quoting from Matt. XXVIII. 19 (not Mark, XVI. 15/16 here) and he adds these words: “The order is significant. They were first to evangelise—then baptize.” His aim in this is only too palpable. No doubt they did evangelise according to Luke XXIV. 47. But where is there actually a word about evangelizing in Matt XXVIII.? The whole emphasis is upon making disciples. Why not keep to the word our Lord used? Why? Only because the word “evangelise” would seem to favour Believers’ Baptism, and for that reason the force of our Lord’s words must be sacrificed.

But in addition to these defects (serious as they are) there is a still more serious defect in regard to our author’s attempt to give us the **truth** of the matter in that he omits all reference to some of the most prominent and vital statements on the subject given us in the New Testament. If he had entitled his booklet “A few thoughts on Baptism,” he might have been excused, but to assert that he is giving us the “truth” as to Baptism, and then give us only a one-sided view is another matter. We are far from bringing any charge of deliberate dishonesty, such was not his intention we are sure, but this matter has become serious (that is why we dwell upon it), because views are constantly proclaimed to be the truth on this particular subject, and

nothing but the truth, yet which are not the truth at all. And further, anything of a contrary nature is said to be most dangerous doctrine, to be resisted at all costs. It is quite time the matter should be brought to the test of Scripture. This writer can use such expressions as “this momentous declaration concerning baptism” (viz., our Lord’s utterance) and again “the **tremendous importance of baptism**” (*italics his*), and yet his book is one of the most glaring cases of **special pleading** we have ever seen.

Here are some of his omissions. In referring to Acts II. he omits all mention of the apostle’s words as recorded in v. 38, which are the most essential part, if we are to understand the **meaning** of Baptism.

He refers to Acts VIII. but Simon is not so much as named. Though we learn from the passage that “Simon himself **believed also.**” But, of course, this presented a little difficulty so it is conveniently passed over. And he passes on to the case of Philip and the Eunuch. Although he does not actually quote v. 37 he makes use of it without giving his readers the slightest hint that it is more than likely that Philip never said anything of the kind. There is not even a footnote to indicate that modern translators reject the contents of verse 37.

Here is another omission. And will the reader please remember that it is “The **truth** concerning Baptism” which is being set before us. The conversion of Saul of Tarsus and his baptism as related in Acts IX. is given us, but all reference to Acts XXII. 16, where Paul gives his own account of it, is omitted. Again we ask, Why? The statement, “Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins,” throws a most important light upon the truth of Baptism. But Baptists cannot make it fit their ideas and so they leave it alone. But is this the way to act when professing to set forth the **truth**?

On p. 17, our author falls into the same error as most of his school by pressing that it is a command to the believer, only he is not satisfied with anything less than large block capitals, in which he emphasises “the joy of implicit obedience to the revealed will of God.” Yet he is referring to what took place in the house of Cornelius (Acts X.). Strange, indeed, if Peter looked at it in that light he should have said, “Can any **man** forbid water?” And stranger still, perhaps, that in regard to a command of such overwhelming importance, and upon which, we are told, so much joy depends, that the individual himself has no power to carry it out!!! It is not what he does, as already observed, but what is done to him!

Further on, this thought of obedience is pressed to such an extent that it is made to appear as if the one outstanding command of Christ is to be baptized. John XIV. 21 is quoted just as if that had been the main thing in our Lord’s mind at that solemn season in the Upper Room! At least, no other form of obedience is mentioned. All is made to converge on Baptism—“Giving Him our hearts’ devotion, and by responding to His loving request when He calls upon us to show in a public manner our identification with Him in His death and resurrection by passing through the waters of baptism.” We do not hesitate to say that this exaggeration of the pleasure Christ derives from the mere fact of our being baptized is calculated to do great injury to anyone who is carried away by it. For it suggests that our Lord is greatly pleased with a person who goes through the waters of baptism, and the greatest pleasure we can give Him is supposed to consist in going through a ceremony. Whereas Scripture teaches it is the obedience which follows the act which is important.

We have never met with any document professing to set forth the "**truth**" of Baptism presenting such a one-sided case and in such exaggerated language. Listen to this: "Beloved fellow Christian have **you** taken this important step? Have **you** thus sought to give infinite pleasure to Him Who died for you and rose again?" And this in connection with an outward form. Talk of Ritualism! Why this is as bad as Romanism! Water Baptism is a favour conferred upon the baptized. The obedience which pleases Christ should follow upon baptism.

Yet he tells us in the same breath "there is no virtue in the water—there is no virtue in the act itself." That there is no virtue in the water, **as water**, we quite agree, but to add, "there is no virtue in the act itself," is quite a different matter. What! no virtue in a Divine ordinance? Is it a piece of meaningless ritual? And this assertion is made in reference to the passage in I. Pet. III. 21., where the Apostle distinctly tells us there is virtue in it. "Whereunto even baptism," he declares, "doth also now save us." Can that which "saves us" be without virtue? Who would say that even a life-line—dead thing as it is in itself—had no virtue to save a drowning man? Certainly its virtue is of no avail if it fails to reach him, **or if he refuses to lay hold of it**. So with baptism. If people deny their baptism; if they fail to lay hold of the privileges it places within their reach, then it has no more virtue than a dead life-line. But taking Baptism as Peter presents it we are not at liberty to treat his words as a mere empty phrase, and speak of Baptism as having **no** virtue. What a glaring contradiction to speak of an act as "giving infinite pleasure to Him Who died for us," and yet in the same breath to declare it has **no** virtue.*

* The very words we have already quoted from this author tell us he is thinking of the *act itself*, for he speaks of "passing through the Waters of Baptism."

It is another instance of the persistent way in which he avoids any reference to that which militates against his theory, that the words as to baptism saving, though really the point of the passage he is dwelling upon are entirely passed over by the author of "**The Truth of Baptism.**"

Instead, he dwells upon the necessity of having a good conscience. But how do we obtain this good conscience? He implies that the good conscience is already there, and baptism follows as a consequence. Does he mean to say that a person who hesitates and holds back from Baptism does so with a good conscience? How can that be, if all he has previously said as to the importance of it, and how incumbent it is to obey the Lord's Command, and the pleasure this will give Him, is true? Surely such a person could obtain a good conscience only by submitting to baptism. He could not have it otherwise; and, therefore, the good conscience is the result, and not the precursor, of baptism. He cannot have it both ways.

This is only a further proof that the attempt to relate baptism to an inward state has no foundation in Scripture. It puts a wrong construction upon it, and misrepresents its meaning and intention altogether. Greek scholars tell us that the word translated "answer" in the A.V. (*demand* elsewhere) is a difficult one, but "all the commentators speak of its use as a legal term with the sense of contract, or rather stipulation or obligation of a contract." Baptism, therefore, has in it the sense of contract.* The resurrection of Jesus Christ and His present place of exaltation and authority are the guarantee of all

* Baptism is the *demand* of a good conscience on our part; and that good conscience toward God is made possible on God's part by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. But to suppose a person baptized because he has a good conscience already is without meaning. "For if already saved and having a good conscience," as someone has said, "What need for anything more?"—*F. C. Jennings.*

that God will make good on His side. Baptism, so to speak, bringing the baptized within the terms of the contract, though not of itself giving effect to it. This is done only where there is faith.

We have before us still another pamphlet entitled “Christian Baptism and Counterfeits.” We have already anticipated many of its misstatements. But on p. 13 there is a quotation dealing with Acts XXII. 16 (“Wash away thy sins,”) which suggests that such words have no application to Gentiles. In fact, that they apply only to a case such as Saul’s. The reason given in support of this theory is “We never find any such words in connection with the baptism of the Gentiles.” Does that prove that Baptism does not possess the significance it did once? Does it indeed prove anything? Are we to get rid of all the references to Baptism (e.g., “Baptism doth also now save us”) by saying “This is not found anywhere else”? The formula of Matt. XXVIII. 19 is found only in this one place. Is this an argument for its disuse? Yet it does not appear in connection with a single instance in the Acts. Such arguments are worse than useless. And besides, as we have seen, the Apostle Paul in writing to Gentiles (the Corinthians), and no doubt referring to Baptism, says, “Ye are washed.”

On p. 14 it is stated: “Water Baptism is joined with faith in the seven matters important to the unity of the Spirit mentioned in Eph. IV. 4/5.” In the first place, such a statement is thoroughly misleading, for it would lead one to suppose that “faith” here is our own personal exercise of faith, whereas everybody ought to know that it refers to what is believed—the faith of Christianity. Such as Jude V. 20, “Building up yourselves on your most holy faith.”

There is nothing in the passage which supports the theory of Believers' Baptism, but the opposite, for Baptism comes in in connection with the sphere of profession—"One Lord, one faith, one baptism"; not with the previous verse, "One body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." This last is vital, **and** is only true of genuine believers. Whereas anyone may profess to own Christ as Lord (Luke VI. 46; XIII. 24/7) and profess to accept the faith without being a true believer, and Baptism finds its appropriate place in relation to such profession.

On pp. 16/17 we are given a list of Scripture passages where those qualified for baptism are mentioned, and we are told it is "an ordinance for believers and for no others." By this is meant true believers. But why head the list with Matt. XXVIII. 19? Believers are not mentioned, only disciples, and disciples are not necessarily true believers. The terms are not interchangeable, as we have already shown. Our Lord said to some of His **disciples** in John VI. "There are some of you that **believe** not." Judas was a **disciple**.

Acts VIII. 12 is mentioned, but the next verse of the same chapter is carefully avoided, where we are told "Simon himself believed also."

On page 17 we are informed that

"A careful examination of the whole context of scriptural references to baptism with our Lord's command and the apostle's doctrine on the subject should enable most difficulties to be solved or questions answered relative to the scriptural mode and practice of believers' baptism."

This careful examination we have made; and every page bears witness that Believers' Baptism, **so-called**—and

the various theories attaching to it in people's minds, cannot be found in Scripture.

The statements on pp. 18/19 with reference to the Greek in general, and the retention of the Greek form of the word "baptize" instead of translating it, are entirely misleading. Why go back to 1611, when the Bible has since been revised, and still the Greek form of the word is retained? And we have already mentioned the reason given by one of the Revisers. "Baptize" does not invariably mean "dip," and to tell his readers that "If the idea of sprinkling, washing, cleansing, etc., had been intended entirely different Greek words would have been used"* is only to throw dust in people's eyes, for in Acts XXII. 16 "wash" is the word used in connection with Baptism; and one of its main features is cleansing.

The same must be said of the statement on p. 21: "At a period long after the apostles, when priestcraft was gaining increased power over men's consciences, infants were brought within its scope, and the spell of this great error was reinforced." How could this "great error," as it is called, **be reinforced** if infants were only then brought within its scope? The two statements are contradictory. Origen, who was born in the year 185, of Christian ancestry reaching back almost to the time of the apostles, declares "The Church has received a tradition from the Apostles to give baptism even to children." In the catacombs of Rome there is a monument, universally reckoned by archaeologists as of the second century: and its inscription reads:—

"Achillea, a neophyte (i.e., newly baptized) lies buried here. She died at the age of one year and five months."*

* "Bapto" means "dip," and nothing but dip, but this word is *never* used in the N.T. to denote Christian Baptism.

* From *The Critic Examined* &c., by K. G. X.

If there is any truth in history at all it goes to show that the Baptism of infants within the Christian community was the universal practice, and the first man who objected to it on Baptist lines was Peter of Bruys in 1130 A.D.

The testimony of two men is true. Here is another witness. No less a person than the late Bishop Ryle says: "Every Christian writer of any repute during the first 1500 years after Christ, with the single exception of perhaps Tertullian, speaks of infant baptism as a custom which the Church has always maintained." And yet the author of "**Christian Baptism and Counterfeits**" takes upon himself to affirm that it was introduced long after the Apostles and as the result of priestcraft!

On p. 23, the writer suggests that the views he sets forth are derived from the Bible, and all others are contrary to it. Yet on the same page he informs us that Baptism "is not a means whereby disciples are made," which is in flat contradiction to Matt. XXVIII. 19 and John IV. 1. If the latter is read in conjunction with v. 26 of the previous chapter it will be clearly seen that making disciples could not mean the same as making true believers. We refer to the words, "The same baptizeth and all men come to Him." Taking the entire history of our Lord's mission into account can anyone think that such numbers of **true believers** ever existed at that period? We see, therefore, that Baptism is a means whereby disciples are made, along with teaching.

It becomes positively wearisome to pursue this writer through page after page, and find unscriptural or illogical statements everywhere. At the foot of p. 26 we read: "Baptism effects no removal of sins or guilt, but is an

outward and visible sign that such an inward and spiritual change has already taken place.” Could any assertion be more contrary to Scripture, or to the right conception of Baptism? In the first place, Acts XXII. 16 plainly and emphatically declares that sins are washed away in Baptism. Not as before God, of course. But this distinction is entirely overlooked by the author of Christian Baptism. He means sins and guilt as before God. Does he then mean to tell us that **God** needs a person to go through the outward form of Baptism as “an outward and visible sign” that an inward and spiritual change has already taken place? The inward and spiritual change is what He alone can take account of. Is it meant that He needs baptism to make this more clear to Him? The thought seems almost blasphemous, but this is what our author suggests, if his words have any meaning at all. Or does he mean that it is a sign to his or her fellow believers of “an inward and spiritual change?” How can a rite such as Baptism be any reliable indication of an inward and spiritual change? But all this misapprehension arises from the initial blunder to which we have referred again and again—the blunder of connecting baptism with a supposed inward work of God, instead of with an outward place of privilege and of position. **It is** an induction into a new condition outwardly with a view to spiritual blessing.

At the foot of p. 27 we are told “Baptism is not an initiatory rite of admission into the ‘Church.’” This statement again is a flat contradiction of such passages as Acts II. 41/2, where we find that upon their baptism the 3000 were immediately admitted into the Church (Cf. v. 47) (they would not have been so admitted apart from Baptism) and also of I. Cor. X. 1/2 where at the very opening of that part of the epistle which deals ex-

pressly with the functions, and ordinances, and order of God's House, the Church, Baptism is expressly introduced, and in the character of an initiatory rite. "Passing through the sea" introduced Israel to their spiritual privileges (vv. 3/4). And all this is spoken of expressly, as the apostle tells us, as an example or figure; and the account of what befel them is "written for our admonition." Why? Because outward privileges are not enough. If Baptism does not introduce us to such, the whole passage becomes meaningless.

On p. 30 we are allowed to see to what lengths some can go. Those who have been baptized in the Holy Name of the Trinity are compared with those who had merely been baptized with John's baptism, unless immersed as believers. They are put on the same level. Could anything be much more objectionable? And one serious feature of all this is that timid souls are almost frightened by such language into believing there exists a necessity for another baptism, and that they are committing a great wrong in not submitting to it. We are glad to be able to assure them that the amount of water is not the **essential** part of Baptism (nor is the age at which the rite is performed): but what is important is the meaning of the rite, and the Name in which it is administered.

What is the meaning of such exaggerated language as is found on pp. 30/1 of the booklet under consideration? It has neither meaning nor justification. The assertion is made that "it has been demonstrated that the sprinkling of infants is not baptism according to the Scriptures." We can only say, we have read this paper three or four times, but fail to find a single passage of Scripture quoted which proves anything of the kind. Of human dogmatism there is plenty, as there is of the expression of mere

opinion, and any number of statements which, as we have shown, are directly contrary to Scripture. We have been asking for years, and we are still waiting for the answer, "Where is the Scripture which forbids Christian parents baptizing their children?" Yet although this cannot be produced, those who have been so baptized are told that they "have never yet obeyed the Lord's command"; that "they should make haste to obey the command not fearing the wrath of man." In the same connection the text is quoted "To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin." They are reminded that "One act of disobedience in Eden wrought world-wide ruin." And that "to continue to support a system which not only offers to Almighty God a repudiation of the plain commands of His Word is a serious matter which calls for confession by all God's people and the abandonment of these grave departures from His truth."

How any man can write in this strain is beyond our power to explain. The only way to deal with it is to ignore it. It is a serious thing for him to address the Lord's people in this fashion, under any circumstances. How much more in connection with views of an ordinance, especially when, as we have shown, his views have no basis in Scripture whatever. The views he condemns in such unsparing language were held by some of the mightiest men of God, pre-eminent in the service of Christ: such as Luther, Calvin, Whitfield, Wesley, etc. Yet according to this writer these saintly and gifted men were offering to God "a repudiation of the plain commandments of His Word."

Yet the one who can write in the way already described, pretending that he has a perfect warrant from the teaching of Scripture for what he says, can actually be guilty of

such a statement as this on the following page (p. 32).

“Moreover, baptism in water sets forth outwardly that the believer had been baptized in the Holy Spirit, the inward reality, into the one body.”

And this statement is made in the face of what the Apostle Peter says in Acts II. 38 that, **following upon their baptism**, they should receive the Holy Ghost; while in Acts VIII. we read of another company who, though baptized, the Holy Spirit had **not fallen** upon them (vv. 15/16). These facts furnish indisputable evidence that the above statement is untrue. They further show that baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Ghost **are** in themselves entirely distinct. One can take place without the other. In absolute corroboration of this we find in Acts X. the order reversed, and the Holy Ghost was received **before** Baptism. Moreover, when people had received the Spirit, and this fact became **manifest by speaking with tongues**, what necessity was there for baptism in water to set forth **outwardly** that baptism in the Holy Spirit had taken place? When a writer manifests such palpable ignorance of the subject he professes to expound, how can he be trusted?

It has been our painful but bounden duty to expose error after error, in this booklet. Alas! there is no end to them. Here is another. On p.32 not only is baptism spoken of as a command but the Lord's Supper also. “Both are of equal value as commands,” we are told. We should have thought that to insist upon them as commands, in an obligatory sense (and the word “obligatory” is used) is to rob them of their value. We pity the person who goes to the Lord's Supper because commanded to do so. A remembrance which is only in response to a command is not worth much. But this only

goes to prove how far removed from the true spirit of Christianity are the ideas of baptism and the Lord's Supper propounded in this book.

And now a few closing words. If the reader has carefully followed what has been said he will have realised two things: First, that Water Baptism, as presented in the New Testament, is not quite the same as he has, perhaps, been accustomed to think of it. And secondly, that some of the views held by those who are so ready to lay down the law for other people are quite unscriptural. Indeed, though they are so persistent and dogmatic in seeking to put others right, it would be better for themselves (as well as others) if they would test what they hold by what Scripture actually says.

The fact is, many brethren have become thoroughly heretical in their endeavour to force others to accept certain views on Water Baptism. Even going so far as to make the acceptance or rejection of such views a test. So that one of the qualifications required of a servant of the Lord is that he holds what is called Believers' Baptism before his ministry is accepted.

A heresy, it is well to remember, is not necessarily a flat denial of some truth, but more frequently takes the form of an exaggeration of a truth. The heresies that have afflicted the Church of God all down the centuries have generally been of the latter description. Indeed, the apostle John warns those to whom he writes of this kind of heresy. "Whosoever transgresseth (goeth beyond) and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God." Now, although the case under consideration is not of such a serious nature as that to which the apostle alludes, yet

it is easily possible to hold such extreme views of any truth as to produce a sect and thus become heretical. (I. Cor. XI. 18/19). It simply means making schools or parties round human opinions.

This is exactly what is being done to-day in the matter of Water Baptism. Certain opinions—for they are nothing more, as we have shown—are held and pressed with such persistency and given such prominence as to form a school or party. The proof of this is that those who refuse such opinions are ostracised and treated as outside and unworthy of confidence. And this is done in connection with a movement, which the writer himself does not doubt for a moment was of Divine origin, but which was in no sense a testimony to any particular view regarding Water Baptism.

Let me earnestly entreat my brethren—those to whom I particularly refer—to return to the custom of those early and better days, when God's people were drawn together in love and devotion to Christ, and in testimony to Him, and their unity in Him, as members of His body. There was just as much variety of opinion as to the truth of Baptism at the beginning, as there is now. But these differences were not allowed to divide or cause friction, nor did they prevent brethren being drawn together in the closest fellowship. Not because the views referred to were necessarily unimportant, but they were subordinated to something greater. Brethren did not give up their views, but such views were not allowed to overshadow far weightier matters. Alas, to-day, how different!

And those were the days of greatest spiritual influence and divine enlightenment. Cannot we recover something of their power? We may well ask, How comes it that in connection with a movement so spiritual, in which the power and reality of Christ was once so realised and felt,

such declension should have taken place, that adherence to a particular mode and application of an ordinance is regarded as an indication of peculiar devotedness and spiritual discernment? While those who differ are thought to be below par.

The apostle Paul, the minister of the Church, could declare "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel." Showing, at all events, that ministry is more important than to baptize. How much more important than the opinion of men about baptism. Yet, to-day, ministry is refused and set at nought, if certain views regarding this rite are not held!! And how extraordinary and unedifying it is when those who are so zealous in laying down the law for others — even to the point of urging them to be re-baptized—are completely unable to justify such views when brought to the test of Scripture!!

We believe that God is calling us at the present time to something higher and better than **modes** of water baptism. Christ is seeking a place in the hearts of His people. His word to all of us is: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Thank God, as we have reason to know, some are hearing His voice, and this wonderful experience is becoming theirs. May it be so with many more. In proportion as Christ is everything to us, differences about other matters become adjusted.

We may well bear with one another as to views about Water Baptism. As we have already pointed out Scripture is absolutely silent as to methods and modes. Where Scripture says nothing cannot we afford to do the same? The great point surely is to give the rite itself its proper place, and to grasp the true meaning of it. The important matter in regard to Baptism is not the amount of water

but of its being a religious rite administered in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Its meaning and purpose are inherent in the rite itself.** As to mode, let us leave everyone to his or her own conscience before God in this matter.

While writing this paper there has come into our hands a statement issued by those who gather at the Bible Hall, Finney Avenue, St. Louis, Mo., U.S.A. After repudiating all denominational position and parties, asserting their belief in the fundamentals of the faith, and stating "All Christians who maintain the fundamentals of our holy faith, who walk in truth and piety" are welcomed to fellowship and to the meeting for worship and breaking of bread on Lord's Day morning, the statement proceeds:

In reference to Baptism we distinctly refuse to make it in any way, or to any degree a test of fellowship. We may well be humbled at the differences of view of Scriptures that have been so long current amongst the Lord's beloved people on this subject. We leave everyone free, in accord with the clear principles laid down in Romans XIV., to walk according to his light: either in associating his household with himself in what he recognises as a divinely given privilege connected with an external place of blessing in the Kingdom of Heaven or, in an act that he may regard as one of personal obedience to the Lord. Only let each be fully persuaded in his own mind and let us remember that both may be equally accepted of God, although not walking in the same line.

The writer wishes to say that such a declaration commands his wholehearted support. He feels no doubt whatever that it expresses the mind of the Lord for His people at the present moment; and that to give it effect

will promote their well-being and blessing, and be for His glory.

The main effort of the writer, in the statement now before the reader, has been to make clear the meaning and significance of the rite itself. And to show that certain phases and ideas in regard to it have no warrant from Scripture whatever; while the ordinance, as presented in the New Testament, is often misrepresented in some very important particulars. In the discussion as to the mode in which the rite is to be administered and who are to be the subjects, the primary question as to its meaning and purpose are often misapprehended. As understood by the Jews and early Christians the outstanding ideas were (1) cleansing; (2) induction to discipleship; or, in other words, immersion into a new condition or estate of external privilege with a view to spiritual blessing. The immersion being inherent in the rite itself, quite independent of any particular mode, except, of course, that water was always the element used; (3) it has always a forward view, not backward; (4) it is in relation to an outward condition, not a representation of some inward change in the baptized person.

As has been said: "The preposition **eis**, when not referring to a place, always pointed to the estate or condition into which the baptism brought one. Our Lord is represented by pictures in the Catacombs as standing in the **shallow water of the Jordan, John with a vessel of some kind pouring water upon His head. The early Church believed that the baptism of our Lord was by effusion.**"*

Finally, whatever we may think we have learned from Scripture as to the ordinance of Water Baptism, do not

* *Dr. I. Stockton Axtell.*

let us forget there are other matters vastly more important. Zeal for form, no matter what form it may be, is a poor substitute for devotion to Christ and personal communion with Him. May these things characterise us.

We are about to enter the glory of the Lord, and “with the Son be blest.” Christ is shortly to present the Church to Himself. May the expectation of this, and what it will mean to be “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all,” occupy our minds. What will it be to share with the Son the Fathers love according to His eternal purpose? Let this be our supreme concern, and more the one thing before our hearts. Soon

“All taint of sin shall be removed
All evil done away,
And we shall dwell with God’s Beloved
Through God’s eternal day.”

To this end may the prayer of the apostle be fulfilled in us—“To be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, (Christ in connection with God’s purposes for the Church); that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with (or “to”) all the fulness of God.” (Eph. III. 16/21).