



Clarence Larkin

October 28, 1850 - January 24, 1924

WHY I AM A BAPTIST

By Clarence Larkin

ABSTRACT

THIS work is not a personal history. For fifteen years I was a layman in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and having had my attention called to the subjects and mode of Baptism, after two years of careful study of the subject I deemed it my duty to unite with the Baptists.

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BY CLARENCE LARKIN
September 1, 1887
PASTOR CLARENCE LARKIN

“We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning
this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against.” Acts 28:22

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PREFACE.

THIS work is not a personal history. For fifteen years I was a layman in the Protestant Episcopal Church, and having had my attention called to the subjects and mode of Baptism, after two years of careful study of the subject I deemed it my duty to unite with the Baptists.

In my examination of the subject I found it necessary to read a great many tracts, pamphlets, and books, none of which covered completely the whole ground. Feeling the need of a comprehensive little work to place in the hands of young converts, and those desiring to know the distinctive principles of the Baptists, I prepared the following volume. I claim for it no originality. It is simply a compilation of facts, and the arguments of others, culled from numerous sources after careful and voluminous reading. But as he who could obtain credit for constructing a new edifice largely from old material, with the addition of a little new, must see to it that the old material is not too conspicuous; and as I remember that the Class of persons for whom this is written care more to see the finished building than the method, manner, and material of its construction, I have arranged the facts and arguments culled, so that their source and authorship is not evident.

At the same time I have acknowledged my indebtedness to all who may recognize their own offspring in the garb of a foreigner.

THE AUTHOR
SEPTEMBER 1, 1887

I. ORIGIN OF THE BAPTISTS

Almost all the Anti-papist denominations date, either directly or indirectly, from the Reformation of the sixteenth century. The Protestant Episcopal, Lutheran, and Presbyterian Churches, came from the Roman Catholic Church, and the Methodist Episcopal Church came from the Protestant Episcopal Church.

The Baptists, however, do not date from the Reformation. Though Anti-papists, they are not, in the technical and historical sense of the word, "Protestants," though they have ever protested, and do now protest, against the heresies and abominations of the Romish Church.

Just before his ascension, Jesus said to his disciples:

All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matt 28: 18-20; and Mark adds, He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Mark 16: 16.

The requirements of this Divine Commission, are —

1. To preach the gospel to all nations.
2. To baptize those who believe.
3. To teach those who believe to observe all things whatsoever Christ commanded.

This the apostles did. That the churches they founded were believed to be composed of regenerated persons, is evident from the fact that they addressed or referred to them as "believers," "saints," "quickened," "the faithful," "the redeemed," "the sanctified," "the saved," etc. The apostolic churches were also independent bodies; that is, separate

from the State and from each other, and self governed. They are spoken of individually as, “the church at Jerusalem,” “the church at Antioch,” “the church at Smyrna.” They are spoken of collectively as, “the churches,” “the churches of Macedonia,” “the churches of Asia,” “all the churches.”

They are represented as electing their own officers, admitting, expelling, and restoring members, and acting as distinct, independent bodies.

There is a remarkable similarity between the apostolic churches and the Baptist churches of today, in their modes and forms of worship.

The apostolic churches were distinguished for the plainness and simplicity of their worship. “They had no magnificent cathedrals, gorgeously arrayed priesthood, no prescribed ritual, no splendid religious shows, no pomp of music, no parade of images and paintings.”

Quietly, and unostentatiously, they met in some “upper room,” or other humble sanctuary, to sing, to pray, to read and expound the Scriptures, and to exhort one another to faithfulness in the Christian life.

II. HISTORY OF THE BAPTISTS.

The Baptists claim to have descended from the apostles.

It is true that the line of descent cannot always be traced. Like a river, that now and then in its course is lost under the surface of the ground, and then makes its appearance again, the Baptists claim that, from the days of the apostles until the present time, there have not been wanting those persons, either separately or collected into churches, and known under different names, who, if now living, would be universally recognized as Baptists.

Since the origin of the Baptists, long and eventful ages have elapsed. Some of them were ages of ignorance and darkness. Men were afraid to speak or to write — almost to think. The principles for which the Baptists contended were fiercely denounced as heresy and treason. To speak, was to be hushed in death. Had they not been immortal, all vestiges of them, save in the records of courts and councils, would have perished. Their existence and continuity can be traced down the ages by “the stains of their martyr's blood, and the light of their martyr's fires.”

Since the days of the apostles, they have come to the surface in the Novatians, the Donatists, the Paulicians, the Paterines, the various communities of Waldenses, the so-called Anabaptists of Germany, the Mennonites, or Dutch Baptists, the Baptists of England; and are seen today in the Baptists distributed all over the world.

Dr. Cramp says: “When Luther blew the trumpet of religious freedom, the Baptists came out of their hiding-places to share in the general gladness, and to take part in the conflict.”

The Baptists have suffered, in common with other Christian denominations, at the hands of wicked rulers, and of the Roman hierarchy. They have also suffered by themselves for their peculiar views as Baptists, at the hands of Lutherans, Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists; and for no one thing more than their rejection of infant baptism. In Germany they were plundered, thrust into dungeons, banished, and numbers of them beheaded or burned alive. Torture was frequently employed to wring from the sufferers the names and abodes of their associates, or to force them to renounce the faith. In Switzerland, in 1526, it was ordered that if any baptized others, or submitted to baptism (re-baptism, they called it), they should be drowned without mercy. Many Baptist ministers were drowned; and they held their meetings in secret, in the woods, and under cover of the night. Finally, they left the country in large numbers, going to Moravia, where, for a season, they were tolerated; but at length a law was passed expelling them, and they left, some going to Hungary, some to Transylvania, some to Wallachia, and others to Poland.

In the Netherlands, the hand of oppression was heavy on the Baptists. In 1532, three were burned at the Hague. By edicts, published in the following year, all persons were forbidden to harbor Baptist preachers in Holland; and Baptists refusing to recant were to be slain. The torture was constantly resorted to. The victims were stretched on the rack, or thumb-screws were employed, or a similar instrument applied to the ankles. No regard was paid to sex, station, or age. Under Bloody Mary, a good proportion of the martyr blood that flowed was from the veins of Baptists; and many passed to heaven through the fire.

In the early settlements of America, Church and State were united by law, and the Church sustained by taxation and State appropriations in Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Virginia; and persecutions against Dissenters were violent and severe.

In 1620 (December 20), the Pilgrims landed on Plymouth Rock, and founded the first colony in New England. They were Independents, or Congregationalists; and on board the “Mayflower,” they had made a provision for the support of the church and ministry by taxation. The Pilgrims, or Puritans, did not come to this country to establish religious liberty; they came to establish their own faith, and to exclude all others from their colonies; and they were more intolerant in their colonial enactments against Dissenters than either England or Holland, whence they had fled from persecution.

Roger Williams landed at Boston, February 5, 1631. He had been a minister of the Church of England; but becoming disgusted with its corruptions, he sought a home in the Puritan colony of Massachusetts. But when he found the Puritan Church at Boston still holding communion with the Church of England, he refused to unite with it, and went to Salem. But his sentiments were quite in advance of the Puritans. He boldly preached religious liberty, liberty of conscience, liberty of worship, and declared that the civil magistrate had no right to coerce the consciences of men, nor inflict civil penalties upon men for their forms of religious faith and worship. In January, 1636, he was banished; but his persecutors, fearing that he would establish another colony, determined to send him back to England; but when the officers went to his home to arrest him, he was gone. He had fled into the wilderness among the savages, who furnished him with a home. “For fourteen weeks,” he says, “I knew not what bed or bread did mean.” He had made the acquaintance, and secured the friendship of Massasoit, and the Narraganset chiefs, Canonius and Miantonomoh. By the last two he was welcomed to Narraganset Bay, where he founded the city of Providence. In March, 1639, he became a Baptist, and was baptized by one of his own members; and then he in turn baptized others. Thus was organized the first Baptist Church in America. But the method was never repeated.

Though persecuted by others, the Baptists have never persecuted. They have always opposed the union of Church and State. In Virginia, in 1784, when they had almost conquered in their struggle for religious freedom, a compromise was proposed in the form of the famous “Assessment Bill.” Every one was to be taxed to support religion; but to have the liberty of saying to which denomination his tax was to be applied. The Baptists saw that this was an alliance of Church and State, and opposing it, secured its defeat.

In Georgia, in 1785, a law for the establishment and support of religion was actually passed, through the influence of the Episcopalians. It embraced all denominations, and gave all equal privileges; but the same year, the Baptists remonstrated against it, sent two messengers to the Legislature, and it was promptly repealed. The first modern treatise ever written upon “Religious Liberty,” was by Leonard Busher, a Baptist, in 1614. The Baptists have not only been the firm friends of “Religious Liberty,” but of “Civil Liberty” as well.

Thomas Jefferson had much to do in shaping the government of Virginia, and of the United States. He was not a Baptist, but he was brought up in close relations to them; and about ten years before the Revolution, he attended, for several months, the meetings of a small Baptist church near Monticello, his country seat, and became much interested

in their church government; and declared that it was the only true democracy existing in the world; and that he believed it would be the best plan of government for the American Colonies.

A National Constitution for the United States was adopted in 1787. Its provisions were satisfactory so far as they went; but many felt that “Religious Liberty” was not sufficiently guarded. The Baptist General Committee of Virginia, in 1788, expressed their disapproval of this important omission, and, after consultation with James Madison, they wrote to President Washington, saying, that they feared that liberty of conscience, dearer to them than property or life, was not sufficiently guarded in the Constitution. Washington sent a kind and encouraging reply, and in the very next month, Virginia proposed that immortal “First Amendment” to the Constitution of the United States:

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech or of the press, or the right of the people peaceably to assemble and petition the government for a redress of grievances.

III. STANDING AND NUMBER OF THE BAPTISTS.

It is sometimes disdainfully said that the Baptists are poor, illiterate, few in number, devoid of social refinement, and occupy an unimportant position in the world. Neither wealth, learning, numbers, social position, courtliness of manners, nor worldly influence, have any necessary connection with piety or the favor of God. If they have, then the apostles and other early Christians possessed neither. They were fewer in number, more deficient in power, more illiterate, and more depressed socially, than the Baptists now are.

As to the numbers, the Baptists cannot now be called a “mere handful.” In the United States, they have increased from one in sixty, in 1790, to one in twenty, in 1885. In the year 1700, there were but 15 Baptist Churches in America. In 1750, there were 58, an increase of nearly one a year. In 1790, there were 872, with a membership of 64,975, a gain of 20 churches a year. The population of the United States in 1790, was 3,290,000, one in every sixty being a member of a Baptist Church.

In 1830, there were over 5,000 churches, with over 300,000 members, a growth of over 100 new churches a year. In 1870, there were 17,445 churches, an average growth of one a day for the twenty years preceding. At the close of the year 1886, there were 30,522 churches and 2,732,570 members, an average growth of one and a half new churches per day.

If we were to include in the above all those denominations that regard immersion only as Scriptural baptism — the Freewill Baptists, (open communion), 82,323; Disciples, or Campbellites, 850,000; Seventh Day Baptists, 8,733; Tunkers, 100,000; Adventists, 100,000; Six-principle Baptists, 2,200; Church of God, or Winebrennarians, 45,000; in all, 1,188,256* (*Baptist Year_Book, 1887. Page 198.). – we should have (with Regular Baptists, 2,732,570), a grand total of 3,920,826 – a number larger than the population of this country at the time of the War of Independence. While the Baptists in the United States are equal, numerically, to the Methodists, strictly counted, they outnumber the Presbyterians two to one, and the Episcopalians seven to one.

They are found in Great Britain, in France, Italy, Spain, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Austria, Russia, and Switzerland. In India, the Baptists have many churches, composed exclusively of baptized believers. They have established themselves in China and Japan, in Brazil and the West Indies, among the Indians, and in Australia; and are now pushing their way rapidly into Central Africa.

Neither can the Baptists be justly chargeable with want of intelligence and learning. Milton and Bunyan were Baptists. One of the most accomplished Oriental scholars, as well as one of the ablest expositors of the Holy Scriptures during the last century, was John Gill, a Baptist.

William Carey, who, during the forty years of his labors in India, in connection with his associates, published two hundred and twelve thousand volumes of the Bible, in forty different languages, was a Baptist. So was Adoniram Judson, whose version of the Bible in Burmese, is pronounced by Burmese scholars, "Perfect as a literary work."

That finished pulpit orator, Robert Hall, was a Baptist; and we can point today to C. H. Spurgeon, of London, and many others, who are not a whit behind the most eminent men in other denominations and walks of life.

In addition to their achievements in translating and publishing the word of God, the missionaries of the English Baptist Society have written and published fourteen grammars and nine dictionaries, mostly of languages in which no such works previously existed. The British and Foreign Bible Society owes its origin to Joseph Hughes, a Baptist. And to a Baptist deacon, William Fox, was due the organization of the first great National Society in England, in behalf of Sunday-schools.

The American Baptist Publication Society was organized in Washington, D. C., in 1824. In 1826, it was moved to Philadelphia; and, after several removals, it finally located at 1420 Chestnut Street, where a building, 46x230 feet, five stories high, with a basement, was erected, costing, with the ground, \$258,586.86, which was entered, free of debt, in 1876. The receipts of the Society, in its first year (1824), were \$373.80; in 1886, they were \$624,140.43. The receipts of the first TEN years were \$34,702.30; of the ten years preceding the year 1887, \$4,712,120.25. During the five years ending April 1, 1885, the Society gave away 334,893 copies of the Bible or Testament. The Society's colporteurs and Sunday-school missionaries have organized over 7,154 Sunday-schools. It publishes over 1,212 publications, and of one book alone – "The Blood of Jesus" – it has printed 119,000 copies. It prints 12 distinct Sunday-school periodicals, with a circulation, in 1886, of over 28,000,000 copies, consuming over 12,000 reams of paper, weighing more than 330 tons.

The Society has printed, since its organization (from 1824 to 1885), 330,087,724 copies of books, tracts, and periodicals, an average of over 14,354 copies daily. If all that the Society has printed had been put in book-form, it would have made 21,861,177 books, of 300 pages each.

IV. THE DOCTRINES OF THE CHURCH.

The phrase, doctrines of a church, is somewhat doubtful in its meaning. It may mean what a church teaches, or what a church believes the Bible to teach. It is here used in the latter sense.

The Baptist view of Bible Doctrine may be briefly summed up in the following

BAPTIST CREED.

We believe in one true and living God, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth; that in the unity of the Godhead, there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in divine perfection, and executing distinct, but harmonious, offices; that man was created in holiness, but, by voluntary transgression, fell; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint, but choice, and are under just condemnation of eternal death without defense or excuse; that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God: that this salvation is conditioned upon repentance and faith; that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; that at the moment the sinner

exercises saving faith (which is confiding trust in, and a relying on, the Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone, as his all-sufficient Saviour), he is justified; that this justification is not so much a pardon for sin, as an acquittal from guilt by the imputation of Christ's righteousness; that justification leads to full assurance of faith; that regeneration, or the "new birth," is simultaneous with saving faith and justification, and consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that sanctification is a growth in grace, begun in regeneration, progressively carried on by the Holy Spirit, and completed at death; that true believers will persevere unto the end, kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation; that the dead remain in a conscious, though disembodied, state until the resurrection; that Christ shall come in person to raise the dead and translate the living; and, at the final judgment, the righteous and the wicked shall be separated forever.

Baptists agree in the main with all evangelical Christians in the above. Immersion in water is not the only thing that distinguishes them from other denominations. There are certain fundamental principles which they hold, and have ever held:

"Christ Jesus the sole Lawgiver in spiritual things; the word of God-the only authoritative guide in religious faith and practice; the responsibility of each individual to God, and to him alone, in all matters of conscience and religious worship; the entire separation of Church and State; the restriction of church membership to persons making personal and credible profession of faith in Christ-this may include children, but not infants; the restriction of the Lord's Supper to baptized believers; and the independence of the churches of Christ."

We shall now proceed to give more in detail, the reasons for this difference of belief and practice.

V. BAPTISM.

Christ instituted, or appointed, for his disciples an external rite, called baptism. Whether he originated the rite or not, makes no difference. The Congress of the United States may enact a law which has long been in force in some other country, if it sees that it will meet the needs of our own country. It is therefore unimportant, whether or not there existed among the Jews, before the Christian Era, what is known as Proselyte Baptism, and that from it the Christian rite was derived. Suffice it to know that Christ made the rite, whether it existed before or not, a law to the Christian church, and that for all time.

Go ye, therefore, and disciple all nations, BAPTIZING them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit; teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.

And as a law cannot be repealed, except by the enacting power, and Christ has nowhere provided for its repeal, therefore, it is presumption on the part of any church or council to set the rite aside, or change the act prescribed by the Lord.

WATER ESSENTIAL TO BAPTISM.

That water was and is essential to the rite is the common belief, and the ground of this belief is the oft-repeated mention of water in connection with its administration in the New Testament. The eunuch said: "See, here is water! what doth hinder me to be baptized?"

The fittest emblem of sin is pollution, and the most suitable emblem to signify its removal would be some cleansing element as water; and as water was universally used in the East as a token of moral cleansing, the Saviour doubtless chose it for its significance.

It is true that there are those who hold that the baptism commanded by Christ is a baptism of the Spirit; but this cannot be the baptism commanded in the Great Commission (Matt. 28: 19, 20), for it is baptism into the name of the Spirit. Neither can those who feel that they have received the baptism of the Spirit justify themselves in neglecting water baptism; for their having received the baptism of the Spirit; so far from being a reason why they should not be baptized with water, is the very reason why they should.

Can any man forbid WATER, that these should not be baptized, WHO HAVE RECEIVED THE HOLY GHOST as well as we?" (Acts 10: 47.)

THE MEANING OF THE WORD BAPTIZO.

In the English version of the Scriptures, the Greek words "baptizo" and "baptisma," are Anglicized, not translated. That is, their termination is made to correspond with the termination of English words. In "baptizo," the final letter is changed to "e," and in "baptisma," the last letter is dropped altogether.

The primary and ordinary meaning of the word "baptizo," is to dip, plunge, immerse, bathe, overwhelm; and its secondary and figurative meaning involves its primary meaning. So testify thirty-four of the more common and best authorized Greek Lexicons, as well as all the standard encyclopedias, scores of expositors and commentators, hundreds of college, university, and theological professors, and uncounted numbers of the most learned writers of different denominations.

Prof. Moses Stuart, a Congregationalist, while listening to a class reading and translating from the Greek testament, was surprised to hear a student translate Mark 16: 16 — "He that believeth and is sprinkled, shall be saved."

"Sprinkled," replied the Professor, "is not correct."

"Is it not in accordance with the practice of the denomination?" asked the student.

"That is not the question," replied the Professor. "You are now translating the Greek Testament, and the word means, immerse."

If Christ had intended us to sprinkle, he would have used the Greek word "rantizo"; if to pour, the word "cheo."

Sane and intelligent men, when soberly discoursing in a language with which they are familiar, will use words in their proper meaning. They will not use a word meaning "to cry," when they intend to convey the idea "to laugh."

If five reliable eye-witnesses were to relate the destruction of a certain city by a great fire, could anything be more perverted than to say that it was a flood they meant?

Matthew states (Matthew 3: 6), that the people were baptized of John "in Jordan"; and Mark adds (Mark 1: 5), "in the river of Jordan"; and John says (John 3: 23), "in .AEnon, near to Salim, because there was much water there"; and

Luke, in Acts 8: 35-39, relates of Philip and the eunuch, that “as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water,” and that “they went down both INTO the water,” and came “up OUT of the water.”

But it is often said that the Greek preposition “eis,” translated “into,” means “to,” and that Philip and the eunuch went only to the water. If this is true, then the “wise men” did not go “into the house,” and did not return “into their own country,” and the demons (Matt. 8: 31-33) did not enter “into the swine,” and the swine did not run “into the sea.” Again, the Saviour (Matt. 9:17) did not speak of putting wine into bottles, but only to bottles. Query: “How could the 'new wine' break the 'old bottles' without being put in them?”

Once more – “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.” Here the word “eis” is used; and if it means simply “to,” then that passage should read: “And these shall go away to (close by, not into) everlasting punishment, but the righteous to (close by, not into) life eternal.”

But Pedobaptists admit that “eis, “in the above passages, means into. Why then limit its meaning, when baptism is the subject at issue? As Dr. Pendleton says — from whom the above is quoted — “The little word `eis ' is a strange word. It will take a man into a country, into a city, into a house, into a ship, into hell, into HEAVEN - into any place in the universe, except the water.”

It is said that John baptized not in, but at Jordan. Episcopalians and Methodists are precluded from a resort to this objection; for the “Book of Common Prayer,” and the “Discipline,” both teach that Jesus was baptized “in the Jordan.” In all the range of Greek literature, the preposition “en,” used in Matthew 3: 6, and translated “in,” means “in.”

But it is said that there are texts, in which the word “baptize” occurs, where it not only does not, but cannot mean immersion. Thus we are told that the Israelites were “baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea” (1 Cor. 10: 2; Exod. 14: 16-22); and yet the Israelites were on “dry land,” and “under the cloud” — how could such a baptism, standing on dry land, be an immersion? We simply ask, which mode does walking through the sea on dry land, with a wall of water on each side and a cloud overhead, most resemble – sprinkling, pouring, or immersion?

Again, it has been said that Christ himself told his disciples: “Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence” (Acts 1: 5), and that when that baptism came, Peter said: “This is that which was spoken by the Prophet Joel. . . I will POUR out my Spirit upon all flesh.” Peter does not call that baptism a pouring, as some affirm; he simply quotes the words of the prophet. That it was an immersion, is evident from the fact that the Holy Ghost filled the whole house. (Acts 2: 2.)

THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCHES.

Immersion continued to be the general practice among Christians for THIRTEEN HUNDRED YEARS. The first account we have of sprinkling, or pouring, is that of the case of Novatian, about the middle of the third century. While unbaptized, he fell into a dangerous sickness; and, because he was likely to die, was baptized on the bed where he lay by having water sprinkled or poured all over him. He recovered, was afterward elected Bishop; but the election was contested, on the ground that he had not been “lawfully baptized.”

From that time on, A. D. 250, sprinkling was permitted, but only in a case of necessity, death being imminent. It was not considered regular baptism, but was called “clinic” or “sick baptism.”

France seems to have been the first country in the world where baptism by pouring was used for those in health. The Church of Rome first tolerated it in the eighth century; and in the sixteenth century, she generally adopted it.

In A. D. 1549, the Church of England made an exception in favor of sprinkling for “weak” children; and within a half century thereafter, sprinkling began to be the more general, as it is now almost the only, way of baptizing in that church.

But some Pedobaptists hold that John's baptism was not Christian baptism, and therefore immersion in water is not Christian baptism. They quote, in defence of this, Acts 18: 25, and Acts 19: 3-5:

And he (Paul) said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John's baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

What was the difference then between John's baptism and Christian baptism? Simply, John's baptism was “unto repentance”; Christian baptism was “after repentance,” and was in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Says Christ: “Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” The act was the same — immersion in water. This is evident from the meaning of the word “baptizo,” from the practice of the apostles, and from the testimony of the early Fathers of the Church.

BARNABAS, a writer of the apostolic age, says: “We indeed go down into the water.”

TERTULLIAN, A. D. 200: “We are immersed.”

CYRIL, Bishop of Jerusalem, A. D. 348: “The body is dipped in water.”

VITRINGA: “The act of baptizing is the immersion of believers in water. Thus, also, it was performed by Christ and his apostles.”

MODERN TESTIMONIALS.

JOHN CALVIN, the founder of Presbyterianism. — Among the ancients they immersed the whole body in water. It is certain that immersion was the practice of the ancient church.”

MARTIN LUTHER, the leader of the Reformation. — “Those who are baptized should be deeply immersed.”

DEAN STANLEY. - “Baptism was not only a bath, but a plunge, an entire submersion in the deep water. In that early age the scene of the transaction was either some deep wayside spring or well, as for the Ethiopian, or some rushing river, as the Jordan, or some vast reservoir as at Jericho or Jerusalem. Such was apostolic baptism. We are able in detail to trace its history through the next three centuries.”

THE OBJECT OF BAPTISM.

What is baptism? Not the way in which it is to be administered, but the act to be performed?

With Baptists it is a mere question of taste and convenience, whether baptism shall be administered in a stream of water, or in a baptistery; whether backward, or face foremost; whether only once, or three times, once each in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but they do insist on an immersion in water. Why?

Because it represents the saving truths of the gospel — the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

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. – Romans 6: 3-5.

BAPTISM NOT ESSENTIAL TO SALVATION.

Baptists do not believe that baptism is essential to salvation, for baptism is mentioned in the New Testament as distinct from the gospel of salvation.

Those who hold that baptism is essential to salvation, quote John 3: 5: “Except a man be born of water, and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God,” and they add, “What then is to become of those who are too sick to be immersed? Are they to be shut out of the kingdom of heaven?

If the words – “born of water” – mean baptism, which is disputed, the fact that the want of baptism will not keep any one out of heaven, if circumstances forbid its being administered, is clearly shown in Christ's words to the dying thief: “Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23: 43.) The thief was not baptized, and was saved; and for all we know, Simon who was baptized, was lost.

“Then Simon. . . . was baptized. . . . But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee. . . . Thou has neither part nor lot in this matter; for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.” (Acts 8: 13-20.) So was Judas Iscariot.

In 1 Peter 3; 21, we read — “The like figure where-unto baptism doth also now save us.” That baptism doth “NOW save us,” is certainly strong language, and it is a correct translation. But how save us? Look at the preceding verse, and you will see that Peter has reference to the analogy between salvation by the ark, and salvation by baptism. Both were dependent on faith; one on faith in the ark, the other on faith in Christ.

Then Ananias said unto Saul: “Why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)

That baptism is a saving ordinance, in that it washes away sin, is here implied. But how does it wash away sin? Not by actually washing away sin from the soul; but by expressing faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which leads to our justification.

IMMERSION IN WATER ESSENTIAL TO OBEDIENCE.

Baptists are often told – “All that you say may be true enough; but after all, it is of no consequence. It does not matter whether we have had a little water sprinkled on us, or have been immersed in the ocean. A few drops, more or less, is of no importance.”

If your father told you to go and take a bath, and you said to yourself, “Oh, that is not convenient – I will just wash my hands and face, and that will do” – would that be obedience?

When God instituted the Passover, he clearly illustrated that maxim of the law, that the expression of one thing is the exclusion of another. A lamb was to be killed – not a heifer; it was to be of the first year – not of the second; a male – not a female; without a blemish – not with a blemish; on the fourteenth day of the month – not on some other day; the blood was to be applied to the door posts and lintels – not somewhere else.

They that would substitute sprinkling, or any other act than that of immersion, for baptism, should not forget the awful fate of Aaron's sons when they took common fire, instead of fire from the altar, to burn incense. (Leviticus 10:1- 2.)

Let no man call that an useless unmeaning ceremony, to which the sinless SON OF GOD submitted, that he might “THUS fulfill all righteousness.” Never was an ordinance so honored. Each person of the TRINITY being present. The blessed Redeemer submitted to be baptized; the Father approved, saying: “Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”; and the Holy Spirit, like a dove, descended and rested upon Christ.

Let us see if it is of no consequence! “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14: 5.) “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.” (John 14: 21.)

Now Christ has commanded us to be baptized (Matt. 28: 1820); and to be baptized denotes a particular act; and that particular act is pointed out by the word “baptizo,” whose common, ordinary, literal meaning is to immerse; and as immersion is typical of the burial of our Lord and sprinkling is not, it is a matter of vast importance which act we select; for one is obedience, the other disobedience; one exhibits love, the other indifference.

Indifference to the command of an earthly king would justly be regarded as criminal — a fault to be swiftly and severely punished-and yet we are told that it is a matter of indifference whether we obey Christ, our Heavenly King!

The United States Navy has its “Signal Service,” by means of which the movements of a fleet can be directed, and the issues of a battle decided. If the “Signal Book” prescribes that a flag of a given form shall have a given meaning, is the form nothing?

Let the signal-officer disregard the form, and display a flag of another pattern, the result will be misunderstanding, attended by disaster. Is the form then non-essential?

But, you say, it can hardly be that the vast majority of Christians who sprinkle are wrong, and the few who immerse are right. Numbers are no argument for truth. Pagans are far more numerous than Christians, and Roman Catholics outnumber Protestants.

OBJECTIONS TO IMMERSION.

Those who stigmatize immersion as indelicate, unbecoming, and improper, unfitted to the refinements of our modern civilization, and, therefore, to be set aside for something more genteel and elegant, are, perhaps, honest; but their objection is silly, or worse. To set their taste above Christ's law, would be sin. Did not Christ know of the greater convenience of sprinkling? Did not he know all about the rigors of a northern winter, and the necessity there would be to cut the ice?

As to the impossibility of immersion, it does sometimes exist; as in cases of sickness, or continued feebleness. What is the rational view to be taken of such cases? Evidently that the person so situated is, for the time, excused from performing the outward act, the inward disposition being accepted; for to substitute a different rite, as sprinkling, not only changes the act, and does away with the significance of the ordinance, but opens the way to its abuse; for some would argue, if sprinkling can be justified in some cases, why not in all?

But it is said that there are countries too cold to allow of immersion; and, as the Christian religion is intended for the whole world, Christ must have foreseen that the rite would have to be changed for the colder climes; and in this view, they see the permission to change the rite. Again we say, if the rite cannot be administered as Christ directed, then we are justified in omitting it; for he would never require as essential that which is IMPOSSIBLE. To change the rite in cold climes, again opens the door to its abuse; for who shall say what degree of temperature shall justify a change of the act which the law specifies; for temperature changes not only with the seasons, but from hour to hour. Such permission practically allows a change of rite in all climes. For illustration, if a candidate is to be immersed only when the temperature is 70° or above, and to be sprinkled when below, and an announcement had been made of a “baptism by immersion” in the evening of a warm September day, and with the setting sun the temperature dropped to 68°, the baptism by immersion would have to be postponed, or a sprinkling substituted for it.

But where are those regions whose cold makes immersion impracticable? The practice (immersion) of the Greek Church, amid the cold of Russia and Siberia, shows that they form no habitable part of this earth.

As to the objection that three thousand could not be immersed in one day – the Bible does not say they were baptized in one day, but that they were added unto the church; and if they were, the twelve disciples, assisted by the seventy, could easily have done it.

As to other objections, such as that the Philippian jailer was not immersed, etc., it devolves upon those who deny them to prove them impossible.

OBJECTION TO BEING RE-BAPTIZED.

“But I have already been baptized in my infancy, and it is needless now to repeat it.” What was done for you as an infant, and without your consent, is not binding on you. It was not you that did it, but others for you. It is YOUR DUTY to obey the divine command. Scriptural or Christian baptism, as instituted by Christ, is an immersion in water and a confession of faith in him; and is intended to be a public profession of your own faith in Christ; hence, it follows that any other act is not a Scriptural baptism such as Christ requires; and a person sprinkled in infancy, when faith and a confession of faith are impossible, is unbaptized.

It is a principle of American Common Law that if a minor gives a penal bond, that bond is of no value when he reaches his majority, unless he replaces it by another. How much less binding then must be a bond signed, not by the minor himself, but by his guardian. To apply the illustration—the baptism of an infant, which is but a covenant vow of his sponsors, is not binding on him; and if he would make it binding on himself, and desires to secure its benefits, he should ratify it; not by affirming the old bond (as in confirmation), which will not hold in law, but by a new bond—by being really baptized on confession of his faith.

“BUT I DO NOT WISH TO BECOME A BAPTIST.”

“They are a bigoted people, and sectarian division on minor truths are to be avoided. Christians must be more charitable, and make sacrifices to promote union in the churches of Christ.” Plausible reasoning, but unsound. We do not urge you to become a Baptist, or to indulge in sectarian feeling, but only to obey Christ, and lend your influence and example to induce others to do the same.

Make any personal sacrifices you please to promote union among Christians; but never try to secure it at the cost of faithfulness to the Master. Remember — “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.” (1 Samuel 15: 22.) If Christians of all denominations would only observe the ordinance as the Lord commanded, it would promote harmony and union among his disciples. The truth is, that immersion, as baptism, is, like gold coin, current in all the churches. They all accept it as valid baptism. And the blame for lack of harmony rests upon those who are either ignorant of the command of Christ or indifferent to it.

To those who know what the baptism is which Jesus received and commanded, but have never yet submitted thereto, let the words of Ananias come with especial emphasis – “AND NOW, WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED.”

VI. BAPTISTERIES.

At first, baptism was administered in rivers, pools, baths — wherever a sufficient quantity of water could be conveniently obtained. Cisterns and pools were abundant in Jerusalem, and the water supply plentiful, not only for drinking purposes, but for bathing. Indeed, every good-sized house had a bath in the centre of it; and tradition says that the jailer was baptized in a bath in the jail-yard. In the fourth century, baptisteries began to be erected. They were large buildings adjoining the churches. There was usually but one in a city, attached to the bishop's, or cathedral church. In the old Cathedral of Mayence, the ancient baptistery is a marble-cased pool, from eight to ten feet in diameter, and four or five feet in depth, with steps at the side by which the candidates descended for baptism. The baptistery was generally located in the centre of the building, and at the sides were numerous apartments for the accommodation of the candidates.

Without going into a detailed account of these ancient baptisteries, it will suffice to say that many of them can be seen by modern travelers in the countries of Europe.

VII. INFANT BAPTISM.

The first mention ever made of “Infant Baptism” by any known author, was by Tertullian, of Africa about the year 204 A. D., in his work, “De Baptismo”; and he there speaks of it as something previously unknown, and protests against it. Not a word is said of “infant baptism,” nor any allusion made to it in the Bible; while the plain and positive teaching of the Bible, that believers only were baptized in apostolic times, and that only such are now proper subjects of baptism, virtually prohibits the baptism of infants.

Infant baptism, and sprinkling, and pouring, all had their origin about the same time – during the third century – and were the outgrowth of that heresy, “Baptismal Regeneration” – that is, that the “new birth” accompanies baptism; hence the necessity of baptism to salvation. Thus Augustine, A. D. 410, says: “The Catholic Church has ever held that unbaptized infants will miss, not only the kingdom of heaven, but also eternal life.”

The Council of Carthage, that met in A. D. 253, was composed of sixty-six bishops, or pastors, and was presided over by Cyprian.

One of the questions submitted for its decision was, “Whether a child should be baptized before it was eight days old?” The fact that such a question was sent to the Council, shows that infant baptism was a new thing. Had it been practiced from the days of the apostles, that question would have been decided long before A. D. 253. The Council decided “Yes”! assigning this weighty reason: “As far as in us lies, no soul, if possible, is to be lost.” Query: Why did they not decide to baptize it the moment it was born?

But the Roman Catholic Church is consistent. It does not claim that infant baptism is taught in the Bible, or was administered by the apostles; but it does claim that that church is God's representative and viceregent on the earth, and has a right to change or institute ordinances.

As infants were unable to exercise faith, “sponsors,” in number from two to a hundred, were ingeniously supplied, who professed, in behalf of the infant, to repent, renounce the devil and all his works, and to believe the doctrines of the gospel. Infant “communion” began about the same time as infant baptism, and continued until about A. D. 1000.

REASONS ADVANCED FOR INFANT BAPTISM.

1. Baptism in place of circumcision. — Some hold that, as Jewish children were circumcised, therefore the children of Christian parents ought to be baptized. God commanded the former, he never commanded the latter.

If baptism takes the place of circumcision, their male servants and slaves, as well as male children, must be baptized; for all such were commanded to be circumcised. Females must not be baptized, since they were not to be circumcised. All male children of members of the church must be baptized on the eighth day; and all who are not baptized, are forever lost; for the male child that was not circumcised, was to be cut off from his people* (*The advocates of the baptism of infants on the eighth day, are not careful to point out the condition of one dying before the day fixed for its baptism Logically if baptism is the only means to secure them salvation, they are hopelessly lost.).

There are two facts which argue against the assumption that “baptism” takes the place of circumcision.

First – When the apostles and elders were assembled at Jerusalem to consider the question, “whether Gentile converts should be circumcised” (Acts 15), not a word was said about any such doctrine, which naturally, and almost necessarily, would have been spoken of, and would have been an effectual answer to the question at issue; for if the Gentile converts had been baptized, and baptism takes the place of circumcision, why then did the Jewish Christians want them circumcised?

Second. – Circumcision was observed by the Jewish Christians long after the baptism was enjoined, and in use; and even Paul circumcised Timothy, after he had been baptized (Acts 16: 3), which was entirely “out of order,” if baptism had taken its place. Circumcision was a command to parents and masters. (Gen. 17:12.) Baptism is a command to each individual to be obeyed by himself.

2. Baptism of households. – That the apostles generally baptized whole households, is no proof that they baptized infants; for who can prove that those households contained infants? Multitudes of households contain none.

But, happily, as to four out of five cases of household baptism mentioned in the New Testament, we are not left to inferential evidence. The Spirit of God has expressly indicated that the households of Cornelius, of the Jailer, of

Crispus, and of Stephanas, were composed of believers; of persons able to believe, to rejoice, to speak with tongues, and to minister to the saints. As regards the fifth, the household of Lydia, it is impossible to show that Lydia had any children, or that she was even a married woman.

It is true that Christ blessed little children, and said: “Of such is the kingdom of heaven”; but the fact that he blessed them, is surely no reason why we should baptize them. He only blessed them, and his example authorizes us to do nothing more; and when he said: “Of such is the kingdom of heaven,” he meant that all those who belong to the kingdom of heaven become like little children, that is, childlike, obedient, trustful.

This act of blessing little children, which occurred near the close of Christ's earthly ministry, instead of proving the baptism of infant children, proves the reverse; for if infant baptism had been known to the disciples, they would have understood the object of the parents in bringing their children to Christ, and would not have rebuked them for so doing. (Mark 10:13-16.)

THE PROMISE TO YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN.

The advocates of infant baptism sometimes quote Acts 2: 39 – “For the promise is to you, and to your children.” Read the whole passage, and it will expose the plea, drawn from a garbled quotation:

Repent, and be baptized every one of you; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. Then they that gladly received his word were baptized.

What is the promise here mentioned? In verse 16 (Acts 2), we are told that it is the gift of the Holy Spirit. To whom is the promise made? “To you” (Jews), “and your children” (the word translated children means posterity). As Joel says, “Your sons and your daughters” (not babes, but children), “shall prophesy.” “And to all that are afar off” – that is, the Gentiles – as Joel says, “all flesh” – “even as many as the Lord our God shall call.” The remaining words settle the matter: “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized” In other words, the promise is to YOU, on condition of repentance; and to your children on the same condition.

But ought not parents to dedicate their children to God? Certainly! A Christian ought to consecrate himself, and all he has, to God. But this is to be done by the parents themselves, not by priests or ministers. Dedication and baptism are two different things. Yes, fathers and mothers, take your little ones to Jesus, in the arms of prayer and faith. When they are old enough, pray with them, send them to Sunday-school, train them for heaven, and let your example lead the way.

EVILS OF INFANT BAPTISM.

1. Secularizing the churches – The evil of infant baptism is seen in its tendency to secularize the church. It obliterates and abolishes the line of separation between the church and the world. When the whole community is a baptized community, what is this in effect but the taking of the world into the church bodily? This is seen in the Roman Catholic Church.

In the days of Jonathan Edwards (1751), no man could hold office unless he had been baptized. The result was that the church was filled with hypocrites and ungodly men; and when Mr. Edwards refused to receive such at the Lord's Table, it led to his dismissal from the church by a vote of over two hundred to less than twenty.

A church thus largely composed of unregenerate persons, who have much to say in regard to its management, will be apt to favor any innovations that will gratify the gay, sensual, world1), tendencies of its members, and thus cause the church to make a wide departure from apostolic rule and practice.

2. Union of Church and State. —Another of the evils resulting from infant baptism has been the union between Church and State, as seen in the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England.

3. It encourages false views of baptism. – Baptists believe that a child dying in infancy, before it has come to a knowledge of good and evil, will be saved. David said of his infant son – “I shall go to him.” We leave those who have not reached an age which renders them capable of accepting or rejecting the Saviour of sinners, where the Bible leaves them – in the hands of a merciful and gracious God.

It is a fact that the firm stand the Baptists have taken against infant baptism has caused it to be extensively neglected of late in Pedobaptist churches.

The Rev. F. M. Iams, in his book entitled “Behind the Scenes,” mentions the following personal experience: “One day, while walking in the country several miles from home, as I passed the door of a plain, neat farm-house, a woman came out and hailed me. She was the farmer's wife, a tidy German woman, whom I had met not long before at a country wedding. Coming toward the gate, she said: 'Pees you de minister at T— ?' I confessed that I was. Then she asked, anxiously: 'Does you paptize papies?' I acknowledged that I was in the habit of doing so. Then she came to business at once, in these words: 'Veil, den, I wants you to come right in, and paptize my dree little vuns.' I told her how glad I would be to comply with her request, were it proper to do so. I then carefully explained the nature of the ceremony; that it was a covenant between the parents of the children and the church, in which they, together, gave the children to the Lord, and agreed to train them up 'in the nurture and admonition of the Lord', whence it was necessary that it should be observed in the presence of the church, and that at least one of the parents should be a member of the church* (*Mr. Iams was at this time a Congregationalist, but afterwards became a Baptist.). I invited her to bring her children to our meeting, to unite with the church herself, and then to have her little ones baptized.

“I was astonished at the effect of my quiet, matter-of-fact words. 'Ah, no,' she cried; 'it pees a long vay to de town, and ye got no team. It pees a long time pefore ve can come to de town; and may-pc de poor leetle tings die, mit no baptism; an' den dey perish, shoosts like de peasts of the field; dey got no soul, no immortality, no eternal life; 'CAUSE DEY NOT PAPTIZED!'

“It was a cry of anguish. All her mother-heart seemed compressed into her poor, broken words. Her voice was tremulous with feeling, and every word seemed drenched in tears.

“Evidently, she was terribly in earnest, and regarded the baptism of her children as a matter of the highest moment, involving their eternal destiny. It was a fearful revelation to me. I had read about such distorted views of baptism; but they had always seemed to me exaggerated and impossible. I was amazed, shocked, and, for a few moments, thoroughly upset. As soon as I could rally my bewildered wits, I tried to convince her that she greatly overestimated baptism; that it had no saving virtue, and that her children would not be lost for want of it, even if they should die without it. But the training and prejudices of a lifetime were not to be overcome in an hour.

“At length, in very desperation, I cried out: `Do you really think I can give your children immortality, eternal life, by putting a little water on them?’

“Her answer came swift, strong, and utterly 'confounding to all half-way Pedobaptists — 'To be sure you can; and if you can't, VOT'S DE GOOD OF IT?’”

From this illustration, we see that infant baptism is misleading. and has a tendency to make the less intelligent class of people believe that it has a real saving power.

That infant baptism does not regenerate is evident from the fact that many persons, who were baptized in infancy, show by their conduct that they were never born again. Our jails contain many of them; and the moral state of Italy, France, and Spain, where the practice is almost universal, proves the fact.

4. It injures our children. — Again, infant baptism does a serious injury to our children. It nourishes in them a vague idea that something has been performed towards their salvation, and that somehow they will be saved, because they are within the pale of the church. In the form for the “Public Baptism of Infants,” in the Book of Common Prayer of the Protestant Episcopal Church, we find that, after the child has been baptized, the minister shall say:

Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the body of Christ's church, etc.

And in the Catechism, that is to be learned before a person can be confirmed by the Bishop, the candidate having been asked his or her name, is then asked:

Who gave you this name? ANS: — My sponsors in baptism, wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

From the above it is clearly seen that the Protestant Episcopal Church teaches that infant baptism is a saving ordinance; and children are led to trust in it for salvation; and members of that church, when asked for their ground of hope, often say: “Oh! I was received into the church by baptism, and am therefore a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.”

5. Infant baptism fosters prejudices. — It causes children to repel the thought that their parents could have been mistaken, and so they refuse to search the Scriptures for themselves when they grow up. Or it may be that when they are converted, and behold the joy of others in baptism, they may wish to be baptized themselves; but are told: “You have already been baptized.”

The more they inquire and search the Scriptures, the greater is their desire, and the more it seems their duty, to profess faith in Christ by baptism.

What shall they do? Shall they set at naught the rite that their revered parents thought proper to have performed, and so reflect on their belief? There is a fearful conflict between seeming duty to their parents and seeming duty to Christ.

But how dare they disobey his command? It is assuming a fearful responsibility; and the Christian who assumes it must have forgotten what the Lord says of those who love father or mother more than him.

Your plain duty, and your only safety, is to do what you believe to be, on the whole, most agreeable to the word and will of Christ, at whatever sacrifice of your tenderest earthly feelings. In doing so you do not dishonor your parents; but you honor the sincerity with which they acted, and you do a duty towards your own children in setting the example of doing what you think is right.

The Lord's message to you is: "WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE AND BE BAPTIZED."

VIII. THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Baptists do not designate the "Lord's Supper" as a "sacrament." To them it is a "joyful festival," as the "Passover" was to the Jew, in grateful remembrance of our Deliverer, and the deliverance he wrought for us, and nothing more. "This do in remembrance of me." (1 Cor. 11: 24, 25.)

There is not the slightest warrant in Scripture for the belief that the Lord Jesus is in any sense present in the bread and wine, or that his presence in the believer's heart during the "Supper" is different in kind from his presence in him at prayer, or in any other spiritual exercise.

The doctrine of "TRANSUBSTANTIATION," which is that the bread and wine are changed by the words of consecration into the actual substance of the body and blood of Christ, was first taught in the ninth century by Paschasius Radbert. After three centuries of opposition it was proclaimed a dogma in the Roman Catholic Church by the "Fourth Lateran Council (A. D. 1215) and in the sixteenth century it was reaffirmed with more ample statement, and higher solemnity, by the Council of Trent.

This miracle, which, at the word of a mere man, transmutes a wafer into God, is affirmed on the strength of two passages:

First. Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood; ye have no life in you. John 6: 53.

This is inadmissible; for Christ spake these words before the Lord's Supper was instituted.

Second: This is my body. This is my blood.

How could that be literally true, when Christ was seated with them in the flesh? These words are to be taken in the same way in which we take the words: "I am the door" "That rock was Christ."

Luther denied "transubstantiation," but insisted on the real and corporeal presence of Christ in the Supper; so that, while the bread and wine were not changed by the words of consecration, yet the body and blood of Christ were mystically united with them. This doctrine is held by the Lutherans, and is called "con-substantiation."

The Baptists hold that these views are not tenable and that, therefore, the bread and wine are but symbols divinely appointed to represent the body and blood of Christ, through the use of which symbols the sacrifice of Christ is vividly presented to the mind, and by partaking of which the believer expresses, in an outward and significant act, his faith in that sacrifice.

Episcopalians and Methodists, as well as Romanists and Lutherans, receive the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper kneeling. This posture is an unnatural one, and doubtless had its origin in the Romish doctrine of transubstantiation, the bread and wine being considered objects of adoration.

That the Episcopalians and Methodists, who do not believe in the doctrine of transubstantiation, should use the following words when they hand the bread to each person, seems strange – "The body of our Lord Jesus Christ, which

was given for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life”; and in the giving of the cup – “The blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, which was shed for thee, preserve thy body and soul unto everlasting life.” If these expressions do not teach the doctrine of transubstantiation, it will be difficult to find other words in the English language that will.

PREREQUISITES TO THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Pedobaptists all admit that baptism and church membership are prerequisites to the Lord's Supper; and that in the order named. So do the Baptists.

That baptism precedes the Lord's Supper is evident from the Great Commission. (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16.) The order is:

1. Preach to all men the gospel.
2. Baptize all that believe.
3. Then, teach them to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded.

That this was the practice of the apostles is evident from Acts 2:42-43.

1. Conversion.— “They gladly received the word.”
2. Baptism. — “They that gladly received the word were baptized.”
3. Additions to the church. — Those baptized were added unto them.
4. Church fellowship, including the Lord's Supper. — Those who were added continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

A foreigner cannot become a citizen of this country until he has gone through the prescribed forms which bind him to allegiance. He may be better fitted for citizenship than many who are already citizens, but he cannot enjoy its privileges until he has gone through these forms; and no other forms that those prescribed will answer.

On the same principle, while all denominations admit there are real Christians and Christian ministers among the Quakers, yet Pedobaptists, as well as Baptists, will not permit them to come to the Lord's Table, because they have not been baptized; in other words, passed through the prescribed form or initiatory rite (baptism) of the Christian Church.

The only difference between Baptists and Pedobaptists on the Lord's Supper question is, what constitutes Scriptural baptism.

Pedobaptists hold that either sprinkling, pouring, or, immersion, is valid baptism; therefore, they can consistently invite all persons that have been either sprinkled, poured, or immersed, to the Lord's Table.

They say – “ We regard you Baptists as baptized believers, and would welcome you to the Lord's Table among us; why do you not welcome us to the Lord's Table in your churches?”

Ah! that is the point precisely. But I think our Pedobaptist friends can answer that question themselves. Suppose you, my Pedobaptist friend, were to wake up some bright morning, holding precisely the same views respecting admission to the Lord's Table that you do now – that only those who have been baptized and are church members should be invited – but firmly convinced that immersion in water upon a public profession of your faith in the Lord Jesus, is the **ONLY SCRIPTURAL BAPTISM**, what would you be then? What could you be, but what is called a “close communion” Baptist?

The Baptists are no more chargeable with “close communion” than the Pedobaptists. They are firmly convinced that immersion in water is the only Scriptural baptism, and therefore, as honest and consistent Christians, they cannot invite to the Lord's Table any who have not been immersed.

“BUT IT IS THE LORD'S TABLE.”

Those who plead for “open communion,” on the score of “Christian fellowship,” forget that there are three kinds of fellowship — Christian, ministerial, and church fellowship.

Christian fellowship is to pray and sing praises together, to talk of the Lord's goodness and grace, and rehearse our experiences of his mercy and love; and to labor together to edify Christians and win souls for Christ.

This, all denominations can have with each other. But church fellowship is an entirely different thing, and is for the members of an individual church alone.

The Lord's Supper was not instituted for, nor intended to express the fellowship or love of Christians for one another.

Jesus did not say – “This do in remembrance of each other” but “of me.” “As oft as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show - what?” Fellowship with one another? No “the Lord's death.” “The cup which we bless, is it not the communion of what?” Of Christians with one another? No - “a communion of (or, participation in) the blood of Christ.”

When we come together to solemnly partake of the Lord's Supper, is it to meditate on the excellencies of our Christian brethren, or on “HIS” sufferings? Should a brother lean toward you to assure you of his love and fellowship, while the bread was in your hand, or the cup at your lip, you would shrink from him, expressing by your action that such a manifestation of sentiment was out of place. You do not come to the table to commune with your brother, but to meditate on your Redeemer, and to “show his death.”

An erroneous view of the design of the Lord's Supper often causes professing Christians to stay away from the Table of the Lord. Men and women may not be in accord with one another; but if they are in accord with the Master, and desire to show their love to him, duty demands that they should not slight HIM by slighting his table.

In reference to the words of Paul - “He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself” - (1 Cor. 11:20-22) - we must not forget that the Corinthians were in the habit of making a feast of the Lord's Supper, and behaving in an unseemly manner; and it was to reprove such conduct that Paul thus wrote. But it is possible for persons in our day to bring on themselves the same condemnation. For instance, a person, not a Christian, coming into a community and taking advantage of the people's ignorance of his character, to go to the Lord's Table for business purposes; or any professing Christian, who at heart is a hypocrite, and is using religion as a cloak. How can a professing Christian, who is engaged in questionable transactions, “show the Lord's death till he comes,” who, by his conduct, shows that he has no interest in Christ's death — that he needs to be born again?

Yes, it is the Lord's Table. To our own tables we may invite whom we will; but servants may not give out invitations to their Master's Table, except in accordance with their Master's instructions. If a Christian has a right, as such, to the table, because it is the Lord's Table, he has the same right to claim membership in your church, because it is the Lord's Church, whether he subscribes to your articles of faith or not.

WHO PUTS UP THE BARS?

All the Pedobaptist denominations admit that immersion in water is Scriptural baptism. Why then do they not adopt it, and so settle the question?

By their not doing so, it is they who are putting up the bars; it is they who make a difference, and the trouble arises from their conduct. Yet they want to place the stigma on the Baptists.

Pedobaptists say: “We are just as sincere in our views of baptism as you are; and on the strength of that sincerity, you ought to admit us to the Lord's Table.” Strange doctrine! Will sincerity make all our actions right? If so, then was Saul of Tarsus as good a man when persecuting the Church of God as he was when, as Paul the apostle, he labored to build up the faith that he once sought to destroy?

No Pedobaptist ought to feel hurt if not invited to the Lord's Table by the Baptists; because, knowing their views, common courtesy demands that he should respect them. Pedobaptists say that we ought to respect their consciences when they are in our churches, particularly on the baptismal question, and invite them to the Lord's Table. If you came into my house, knowing that I am a temperance man, ought I to respect your conscience, as that of a moderate drinker, at the expense of my own, and sell before you intoxicating liquor?

EVILS OF “OPEN COMMUNION.”

“Open communion” is a modern innovation, having no sanction in Scripture, in the history of the church, or in reason: and is attended by many inconsistencies and dangers.

By means of it, men or women who we would not fellowship in our homes, in our places of business, or on the street, may come into our churches, and there, without even a challenge, be permitted to use their partaking of it as a means of deceiving others, who seeing them there at the Lord's Table, and not knowing them as we do, receive them to their hurt.

Do we not owe a duty to our Lord and Master to protect his table? And can we better do it than by inviting to the Lord's Table only those whom we know to be his consistent — that is. Scriptural — followers?

SOME QUESTIONS ANSWERED.

How shall we treat an immersed member of a Pedobaptist church? Immersed members of a Pedobaptist church, by having insisted on immersion, bear testimony against infant baptism and sprinkling, yet by uniting with a Pedobaptist church, they lend their influence to those things they practically deny. Such conduct is inconsistent, at least it is held to be so by Baptists; and such persons cannot reasonably expect to be recognized as Baptists, or accorded the privileges of a Baptist Church.

Ought Baptists to sit down at the Lord's Table in Pedobaptist churches? No; for by so doing they tacitly admit that the members of the Pedobaptist church with whom they sit down have been Scripturally baptized. Such conduct is inconsistent. And further, it is not right to accept a courtesy that we cannot return; for we cannot in loyalty to our Lord invite them to the Lord's Table in our own churches.

Baptists who live beyond the reach of any Baptist church, and have no opportunity of partaking of the Lord's Supper, except with Pedobaptists, should remain firm to principle; for if it is inconsistent thus to unite with Pedobaptists in the same town where there is a Baptist church, it is inconsistent to do it anywhere.

But it is said: "Baptists hope to commune with Pedobaptists in heaven. Why not here?"

There is a kind of impression that to "commune with" any one, means always to sit at the Lord's Table with him. Surely, however, our Pedobaptist friends do not mean to say, "You expect to sit at the Lord's Table with me in heaven; why do you refuse to do so here on earth?" The Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table of the New Testament belong to the churches here on earth. The very words, of its institution – "Do this in remembrance of me" – indicate that, "when he comes," it shall, at least as an ordinance, be done away. To eat and drink in remembrance of one who is actually present is an absurdity.

But we hope to "commune," (that is, to enjoy fellowship) in heaven, not only with many Pedobaptists, both Protestants and Roman Catholics, but with many who were never baptized, and have here no right to the Lord's Supper, with Quakers, with a multitude of idiots, and infants, with many now living in sin, who will hereafter be led to repentance. Shall we invite all such to the Lord's Table here?

"BUT IT WILL PROMOTE GROWTH AND UNION."

It has been suggested, that if the Baptists were to become "open communionists," they would grow more rapidly in numbers.

In England, where this practice has been largely adopted, the growth of the Baptist denomination has been retarded, in proportion to the growth in population, almost thirty-three per cent; while in the United States, where the Baptists invite to the Lord's Table only baptized believers in good standing, the growth has been increased fifty per cent in proportion to the growth in the population.

The "Free Will" Baptists of the United States, who practiced "open communion," in the fourteen years from 1844 to 1858, decreased in number 322, while the Regular Baptists gained during the same period 300,000 members.

Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and Methodists are "open communion," so far as to permit each other to sit at the Lord's Table in their respective churches; but whoever heard of a Presbyterian administering the Lord's Supper in an Episcopal Church, or an Episcopalian presiding at the Lord's Table in a Presbyterian Church?

Why not? Do they not recognize each other as regenerated men? Certainly they do. Do they not regard each other as baptized? Most certainly they do. The fact is, the various Pedobaptist denominations, as distinct bodies, find it a moral impossibility to sit at the Lord's Table with each other, until they can settle the points upon which they predicate their several existences as distinct bodies.

The fact is, that "open communion" is a theory but little carried into practice.

Why then, as "open communion" does not cause Christian union among Pedobaptists, should they demand it of the Baptists, and charge them with standing in the way of Christian union?

The Baptists of England for the most part are “open communionists,” and yet it is an open secret, that the other religious bodies of England are no more closely united to them, than are the Pedobaptists of the United States to their “close communion” Baptist brethren. Are Presbyterians and Methodists more affectionate towards each other, and do they work together with more harmony, than do the Presbyterians and Baptists? If so, is it brought about by “open communion” among them?

That “close communion” is not in harmony with the spirit of liberalism, rationalism, and skepticism that marks the age, we do not deny; and therefore, as Baptists, we feel the duty of guarding with sleepless vigilance those institutions and principles that our Lord has entrusted to our care, lest, borne away by the strong current of the times, the Master, when he comes, shall find us sleeping.

Is it bigotry to obey Christ? Is it wicked to observe the ordinance of baptism as he observed it? Is it uncharitableness to adhere to the order instituted by himself?

Who are excluded by it? Only those who prefer their own way to Christ's way. Baptist churches are open to all Christians who are willing to come in, in Christ's way — by immersion in water, upon a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus.

And yet they say we exclude them. They are mistaken; they exclude themselves.

If we show them the law of Christ, and they refuse to obey it, is that our fault? Must we give up Christ's way, and adopt theirs, in order to win them back? We should not succeed if we did. We love our brethren much, but we love Christ more. We dread their harsh, bitter, unjust words, for they hurt; but we dread the displeasure of our King more.

Baptists are not unsocial, or intolerant. They will exchange pulpits, mingle in the social and prayer circle, work together for the advancement of God's cause, and rejoice in the prosperity of Pedobaptist churches; but when you ask them to sanction practices that they do not believe to be warranted by Scripture, every true Baptist will be found at his post.

They coerce no man's conscience, but they demand liberty for their Own. “AND NOW, WHY TARRIEST THOU? ARISE, AND BE BAPTIZED.”

IX. THE CHURCH.

The Greek term, “ekklesia,” translated “church” more than a hundred times in the New Testament, is compounded of two words, meaning “to call out of.”

The Baptists hold that a “Scriptural church” is a local congregation of baptized believers, independent of the State, and every other church, having in itself authority to do whatever a church can of right do, and whose members are voluntarily associated under special covenant to maintain the worship, the truths, the ordinances, and the discipline of the gospel.

Churches are visible organizations, the visible ceremonial qualification for membership being baptism. That the membership of the apostolic churches was composed of baptized believers, is clear from the whole tenor of the Acts of the Apostles, and of the Apostolic Epistles. On this point there is no controversy between Baptists and Pedobaptists. The difference between them is — “What is baptism?” The Baptists hold that any church, whose membership have not

been baptized, that is, immersed in water after a profession of faith, though they may be believers, is not a Scripturally constituted New Testament church.

A church is a “local” congregation, and may consist of many, or few members. We read of “the church at Jerusalem,” “the church of Ephesus,” and Paul refers to Aquila and Priscilla, and “the church that is in their house.”

There are three prominent forms of church government, indicated by the terms, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Independency. Episcopacy recognizes the official superiority of a “diocesan bishop” over the “inferior clergy,” as well as “the laity.”

In apostolic times, “bishop” and “pastor” were terms signifying the same office, the overseer of a single church, not of a diocese composed of a number of churches.

Presbyterianism recognizes two classes of elders – preaching elders and ruling elders. The pastor and the ruling elders of a congregation constitute what is called the “Session of the Church.” The “Session” transacts the business of the church; receives, dismisses, and excludes members. The individual members of the congregation have no voice. From the decision of a Session there is an appeal to the Presbytery, which is composed of preaching and ruling elders from a number of churches. From the Presbytery an appeal can be made to the Synod, and from the Synod to the General Assembly, whose decisions are final.

From the above, it is seen that Episcopacy and Presbyterianism imply that it takes several local congregations to make up what is called “the church.” We, therefore, often hear of “The Episcopal Church of the United States,” “The Presbyterian Church of the United States.” Such a form of church government may be deemed expedient, but it is not Scriptural. When Paul had occasion to speak of more than one church, he always used the word “churches,” as, “the churches of Galatia,” “the churches of Asia.” It is therefore improper to speak of the thirty thousand Baptist churches in the United States as “The Baptist Church of the United States”; we should say, “The Baptist Churches of the United States”; for they are all independent of each other, their “Associations” of churches being merely for mutual sympathy and aid; and their decisions are not binding on any church.

Every Baptist church is an independent and a pure “democracy,” and is perfectly competent to do whatever a church can of right do. It is as complete as if it were the only church in the world. A church self-organized, without a council, would be a church; but it would have no right to call itself by the name of some one of the denominations — as the Baptist — without their consent, for the reason that it might hold doctrinal views and practices which would bring discredit on that denomination.

According to the Baptist view, the governing power of churches rests with the members (including pastor and deacons), and should be administered in accordance with New Testament usage. The officers of the church can do nothing without the consent of the membership. The power of a church cannot be delegated, either to its officers, or to any delegates sent to any Association of churches, in any way that will impair its independency. That such a view is

Scriptural, can be easily shown from the conduct of the New Testament churches, that, as individual churches, received, excluded, and restored members, appointed their own officers, and whose decision in all cases was final. Hence it follows, that if a Baptist church were to call a council of sister churches to consider the advisability of ordaining a certain person to be their pastor, and that council should deem it unadvisable, the church calling the council would not be bound by the council's action, and could ordain or not, as it might choose. The independency of the church would thus not be impaired by the action of the council; but at the same time, courtesy, and the standing of both church and pastor, make it advisable to submit to the action of the council.

The advantages of such a form of church government are many. It gives every member in the church a voice in its management; the rich and influential cannot lord it over the poor. Then each church knows which of its members are best fitted, both spiritually and in a business sense, to conduct successfully its affairs as church officers. And who are more competent to choose a pastor than those over whom he is to preside? How often we see or hear of churches crippled, and their usefulness impaired, by pastors who have been placed over them, not of their choice?

Again, it prevents the circulation of doctrinal errors. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.” But among independent Baptist churches, it has no opportunity to spread; for a local church, under a sense of its responsibility, is quick to detect, and as quick to stamp out a heresy. It would not have to be carried from Presbytery, to Synod, to General Assembly, as in the Presbyterian Church, until the whole denomination was divided on it. It was in great part by a single case of discipline that the Presbyterian denomination in this country was divided into the Old and New Schools; and a petty dispute in a small parish has been known to embroil the whole English hierarchy.

The wonderful uniformity among Baptist ministers as to matters of doctrine, in spite of the independence of the churches, has been, and is, a matter of surprise, and can only be accounted for by the fact, that they derive their doctrinal views directly from the New Testament Scriptures.

More satisfactory corrective discipline can also be obtained by the “independent” method of church government. A member is quietly approached according to the rule mentioned by Christ (Matthew 18: 15, 17); every opportunity is given here to explain and confess; and if, after a full hearing, it is deemed best for the glory of God and the good of the church to exclude him, he is excluded; and the world at large knows nothing of it, and the denomination is not scandalized, or rent by his misconduct.

CHURCH WORSHIP.

This is for the congregation, and must have an order, manner, time, place, and some form or other. It would not be orderly for individual members of a congregation to rise, stand, sit, sing, read, or pray, as they felt inclined. But there is a point where natural and spontaneous worship gives place to certain general rules, carefully sought out and selected, so that all things may be done “decently and in order.” The gospel prescribes no invariable form. There is no sign of any fixed ceremonial, dress, written or repeated prayer, or established mode of worship in the New Testament. If the early churches had any, they have not found place in the New Testament, for the wise reason lest we, seeing them there, might be tempted to consider them as of divine appointment.

The liturgies of the churches are an outcome of the Dark Ages, when so many of the clergy were unfit to perform religious worship without a book. The “English Liturgy” is an expurgated edition of the Romish missals and breviaries, accommodated to the controversies and half-reformed prejudices of the times of Henry VIII. The tendency of ritualistic worship is to make the form itself worship, and not the thing signified by the form; where this takes place, the religious character of the people becomes superficial and shallow, and they think more of observing a set ceremonial, than they do of purity and holiness of life.

X. BAPTISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

1. – Passages relating to the mission, preaching and baptizing of John the Baptist.

MISSION. – Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:1-2, Luke 1:16-17, John 1:6-7.
PREACHING. – Matthew 3:1, Luke 3:3, John 1:19-33, Acts 19: 4.
BAPTIZING. – Matthew 3:5-12; Mark 1:4-5; John 3:23, 26; Luke 3:16.

2. – The baptism of Jesus from the Four Gospels.
Matthew 3:13-16; Mark 1: 9, 10; Luke 3: 21-23; John 1:28-36.

3. – Christ baptizing, by his disciples.
John 3:22; John 4:1-3; John 10:40-42.

4. – What Jesus thought of John and his baptism.
Matthew 11:11; Mark 11:29-33; Luke 7:26-30; Luke 20:3-6; John 5:35.

5. – Christ speaks of his sufferings under the figure of “a baptism.”
Matthew 20:22-23; Luke 12:50; Mark 10:38-39.

6. – Christ's commission to his disciples.
Matthew 28:16-20; Mark 16:15-16.

7. – Baptism in the Acts of the Apostles.
At Pentecost. Acts 2:37-47.
Philip at Samaria. Acts 8:5-13.
The Ethiopian Eunuch. Acts 8:35-39.
Baptism of Paul. Acts 9:18; Acts 22:16.
Baptism of Cornelius. Acts 10: 44-48.
Baptism of Lydia. Acts 16:13-15.
Baptism of the Jailer. Acts 16: 29-34.
Paul baptizing at Corinth. Acts 18: 4-8.
Certain disciples at Ephesus. Acts 19:1-7.

8. – Baptism in the Epistles.

Its spiritual design. Romans 6:3-5; Colossians 2:12.

Other references. Ephesians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 15:29; 1 Corinthians 1:13-17.

Illustrated by Old Testament events in a figurative way. 1 Corinthians 10:1-2; 1 Peter 3:20-21

The above references are all to water baptism; the following refer to the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

Matthew 3:11; Luke 3:16; John 1:33. Acts 1:5; Acts 11:16.

But that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is not what is known as Christian baptism, and the baptism which the disciples were commanded to perform in the Great Commission, is evident, from the fact that the disciples had no power to baptize with the Holy Spirit, and that they baptized with water AFTER believers had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

THE END.