

LECTURE I.

THE MODE OF BAPTISM IN THE LIGHT OF SCRIPTURE AND HISTORY.

IN very many places what is called a revival of religion centres around the never-ending controversy concerning the mode of Baptism. In one sense this fact might seem to mean that a great importance is properly assigned to Baptism as a Sacrament, as an essential part of the Christian scheme of salvation. But the teaching connected therewith does not justify such an inference. All the importance is given to the way the water is used in the Sacrament, and no spiritual effect is held to be connected therewith. This great difference seems to be on the side of inconsistency. For, if it does not really practically matter whether a so-called believer is baptized or not, it cannot be of any consequence in what way the washing of water takes place. If there be no effect as regards spiritual life to be looked for from Baptism rightly and properly performed, it seems but vanity and vexation of spirit to make so much of what is called its valid performance.

But since there are so many persistent and reiterated assertions made that the validity of Baptism depends upon one mode—that which is called improperly *immersion*,—and not being convinced that such dogmatic statements are supported so certainly by Scripture and History, I beg to offer you such reasons and arguments as may, perhaps, help you to come to a more reasonable conviction of the whole truth.

And here I wish to remind you and myself, that *assertion* is not *argument*. No amount of zeal nor lung power, will appeal to the intelligence of a reasonable and reasoning mind ; while under certain conditions either, and certainly both, will sometimes have a convincing effect upon certain temperaments. As for zeal, we know that zeal is oftentimes found with error as well as with truth. There is such a thing possible as "having a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." (Rom. x., 2). St Paul had a zeal when he "persecuted the Church," as much as he had afterwards when he "preached the faith which once he destroyed." (Gal. i., 23). He thus describes himself in his Epistle to the Philippians (iii., 6) "concerning zeal, persecuting the church." With regard to the force or power of utterance, this, too, can add nothing either to truth or to error. We are here put in mind of the worshippers of the great Goddess Diana,