

*institute baptism with water as a permanent ordinance in his Church?* In support of the affirmative of this question, we cite his last command to his Apostles, and show by their practice how they understood it. On the opposite side it is contended, that when he directed the twelve to baptize the nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, he had no reference to water baptism, but simply to the baptism of the Spirit. That it must require some nerve even to suggest a construction of these words, which does so much violence to them, will be conceded by all who are accustomed to read the Saviour's teachings without considering how they are to tell upon favourite theories. Allowing that the whole Jewish ritual was now to be replaced by a spiritual worship; that the word baptism, with its derivatives, frequently occurs in the New Testament in a sense purely metaphorical; that there is no mention made of water in this passage; and that Jesus had himself contrasted the baptism of the Spirit, the privilege of his own followers, with the water baptism of John: of what weight are these considerations, to set aside the clear, obvious import of this command? The simple meaning of baptize is to wash with water. There is not the slightest intimation that the Saviour used the word here in a figurative sense. The presumption that he did so use it, is a sheer gratuity, proceeding upon principles of interpretation, which, if generally applied, must destroy the Bible as a rule of faith and practice, by making it the oracle of whatever sentiments it may suit the interests of individuals and sects to have it utter.

The example here presented is, indeed, a very significant one. For we not only have the Saviour's language, but the interpretation his Apostles put upon it. It is not denied that they understood him to refer to water baptism; and that they went forth in every direction, baptizing all their converts with water. The adverse scheme, then, is loaded with these *four assumptions*.

1. It assumes that our Saviour did not intend that his disciples should baptize with water, although he gave them no hint that he referred to any other baptism.

2. It assumes that his disciples and followers *were clothed with power to baptize with the Holy Ghost*. If he did not command them to baptize with water, of course he commanded them to baptize with the Holy Ghost. It is the common faith of the readers of the New Testament—certainly of all evangelical Christians, of whatever name—that it is a DIVINE prerogative to disperse the Holy Ghost. It was the grand distinction between the baptism of Christ and that of John the Baptist as stated by the latter, “I indeed baptize you with water, but he shall baptize you with the *Holy Ghost* and with fire” And accordingly, he said to the Apostles after his resurrection, “Ye shall be *baptized with the Holy Ghost*, not many days hence.” Where is the scriptural proof that this baptism could be conferred by one mortal upon another? The very idea is revolting to every sentiment of the renewed heart. And among all the flagrant impieties of those corrupt churches which have lorded it over the consciences of men, there are few things more odious than the claim that they are empowered to confer the Holy Ghost.

To elude this difficulty, it is urged that the followers of Christ are here instructed to baptize with the Holy Ghost, since it would be through their *mediation or instrumentality* that this baptism should be administered, even as they would be the *instruments* of converting sinners by the preaching of the Gospel. But this will not avail. There is a wide palpable difference between preaching the word or using any mere means, and bestowing the Holy Ghost. The one must, from the nature of the case, be performed by a creature, except, in those rare instances, where Jehovah may see fit to become himself a messenger to one of his creatures. The other, no less from the nature of the case *must* proceed directly from the Deity. The Holy Spirit is, by pre-eminence, his gift. And