

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

CONCERNING BAPTISM.—III.

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From the *Christian Standard*.

MR. EDITOR,—In my last I showed that immersion in water can have no resemblance to the death, burial, or resurrection of Christ; and moreover, that the immersionist interpretation of Rom. vi. 4, and Col. ii. 12, involves the absurdity of making one and the same act symbolize, or show forth, no less than three such different things as a death, a birth, and a cleansing. This is an intolerable confusion of figures. A grave and a burial implied pollution to the mind of every Jew; while water, on the other hand, with the Jews, as with all other nations, was the symbol of purification, and of that only. Throughout the whole ministry of John it will not be pretended that "death, burial, and resurrection" are ever referred to in connection with baptism. The same may be said of the ministry of Peter, and of the whole history of the Church contained in the Acts of the Apostles. Not for a quarter of a century after the institution of baptism is there a single passage found where even the most imaginative theorist can pretend to find any connection between the pollution of the grave and water baptism. And this passage, I have already shown, does not refer to ritual or water baptism at all, but to the real baptism of the Holy Ghost, who makes us one with Christ in all He did and suffered. To make Rom. vi. 4, and Col. ii. 12, a water-dipping, is to materialize and degrade them, and to violate every rule of philology and true Scripture interpretation. The idea of baptism being a burial was not heard of (as far as the record shows) till after the first Council of Nice, A.D. 325, when, as every reader of history knows, both the sacraments of the Church became fearfully corrupted. No word of the "burial theory" can be found in the works of the ante-Nicene writers. The "Symbolum mortis" (symbol of death) of Tertullian, is the "grace of pardon which God grants, not the rite of baptism which man administers" (On Repentance, ch. 6). True, Tertullian dipped, and that three times, while the person was naked, and accompanied the act with many other Romish superstitions, such as the "sign of the cross," oil, spittle, exorcism, insufflation, etc., but he never claimed Scripture for his authority, but only "unwritten tradition." He never claimed that *baptizo* was a modal word, much less that it meant to dip or immerse. In his "De Baptismo," ch. 16, he speaks of "two baptisms (water and blood) poured from the Saviour's side." But why, you will ask, did he practise immersion? The answer is easy. Just because he was a strong baptismal regenerationist. He believed or fancied that the water of baptism was impregnated with a divine power (*vis baptismatis*) which, when applied to the body, reached to the soul and completely changed its condition; therefore he and others with him thought that the water must be applied to the whole body, naked, in order better to develop its baptizing power. They had the same reason for immersing men, women, and children naked that they had for immersing them at all. It took a great deal more than a dipping into water to constitute a Tertullian baptism. It is true, he says (*De Bap.* ch. 1), "We are born in the water like little fishes," but, fanciful, superstitious, and ritualistic as he was, he could not, like the editor of the "Standard," find a "burial" and a "washing" and a "birth" at one and the same time, and in the same act. He would at least have the birth precede the burial, instead of reversing the operation after the manner of the theory.

The Waldenses, prior to the Reformation, baptized in the Scriptural mode by sprinkling; they repudiated dipping as a "Romish invention," and they never gave the "burial theory" any place in their theology or practice for the same reason. The Mennonites, and all the best classes of Anabaptists of the sixteenth century, though they started their own baptism, baptized by pouring or sprinkling. The modern single backward dip originated at London, England, Sept. 12th, 1633; at which time and place John Spilesbury and seven or eight other unbaptized persons "revived the lost ordinance of immersion" (not, however, for the remission of sins) by dipping one another. A. dipped B., and then B. returned the compliment by dipping

A. If this is one of "McKay's exaggerations," Mr. Editor, you will please give your readers something more than your mere assurance of that wonderful fact by placing contrary proof before them in detail.

In your issue of March 4, you head your review of my book with these words: "Some Misrepresentations and Sophistries;" and although you did not intend it, your heading very well suits what follows as your review. You give an extended quotation from pp. 10, 11 of my book (for which I thank you), and then undertake a review of it. You say that my affirmation that "baptism symbolizes the Spirit's work in purifying the soul by applying the blood of sprinkling," is without proof, and that "to make baptism a symbol of the application of the blood of sprinkling, is to make it the symbol of a trope;" and this, you say, "comes as near to being nonsense as it is possible to get without entering on the possession of the genuine article."

A few words will, I imagine, enable the candid reader to determine who must father the nonsense—I or my critic. What saith the Scripture? In 1 John i. 7 we read: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin." Now, does the apostle here speak figuratively, or does he speak of a real cleansing which is indispensable to salvation? The shedding of Christ's blood, we know, is indispensable to remission of sins (Heb. ix. 22). But blood shed and not applied is of no value; and the Word of God informs us as to the mode of application: it says, "By the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. i. 2). Here the inward spiritual grace is described by language borrowed from the outward visible symbol, just as elsewhere the baptism of the Spirit is always described as a pouring, a sprinkling, a shedding forth, etc. (Acts i. 5; ii. 17, 33; Ezek. xxxvi. 25-27; Isa. xlv. 3; Hosea xiv. 5; Joel ii. 28, 29). And as water is an element of physical cleansing or purifying, it came at an early age to be universally regarded as a fit symbol of purity or cleansing—never of death or corruption. And as water in symbolism was always applied by sprinkling (and the blood, too, when that was the element used—hence "blood of sprinkling"), it follows, as a matter of necessity, without proof to the contrary, that the use of water, in the worship of the New Testament is designed to symbolize the real cleansing of the soul by the "blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth from all sin." There is no "symbol of a trope" about it, but according to the Word of the Lord, the symbol of a glorious reality.

There is a sophistry in your statement that there is "no literal sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on the soul of the sinner." The fallacy is in the use of the word "literal" in the sense (as I suppose) of physical. There is certainly no physical application of the blood of sprinkling, but that there is a real application of that blood the apostle affirms in 1 John i. 7 (already quoted), and in Heb. ix. 14: "How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" The apostle here uses, as in many other places, the words "cleanseth" and "purge," or purify; and I esteem that they are used literally, and that in order to the cleansing and purifying of the sinner, the blood of Jesus must be really applied, and in the sight of God viewed as applied to the soul, so that the Lord can and does say to every redeemed soul as he did of old: "When I see the blood I will pass over you" (Ex. xii. 13; and 1 Cor. v. 7).

All divinely appointed administrators of divinely appointed rites, with divinely appointed elements, performed those rites in a divinely appointed mode, and that mode was by affusion—sprinkling or pouring. Will the editor of the "Standard" please point out an exception? Will he give us one solitary instance where any administrator by divine authority put any other person into water, pure or mixed, or into blood or oil, for the purpose of cleansing, purifying, or washing that person? He will not. So, also, the blood of the Son of God is never represented, except in immersionists' hymn-books, as collected into any pool or place into which people are "plunged" for their cleansing from all sin. All religious washings were typical—not intended for a physical scrubbing, but pointing to the great soul-cleansing effected by the Holy Ghost applying the "blood of sprinkling." And they were all, so far as the record teaches, administered by the element being applied to the person; never the person plunged head and ears into and under the element. You, Mr. Editor, speak of the "great scholarship" of Moses Stuart. Well, what

says Moses Stuart? He tells us: "We find, then, no example among all the Levitical washings or ablutions, where immersion of the person is required" (see Biblical Repository, vol. iii. p. 341).

Any reader may see for himself that the washings of Exod. xxix. 4-6; Exod. xxx. 18-22; Lev. viii. 4-6; Lev. xiv. 8, were symbol washings, and could not have been administered by immersion. The word in the original is *rachats*, which denotes simply to wash, without any reference to mode. In Gen. xviii. 4, we read: "Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash (*rachats*) your feet." "Joseph washed (*rachats*) his face" (Gen. xliii. 31). In Job ix. 30 we have this word *rachats* put in antithesis to the word *taval*, which, in that and some other passages, signifies to plunge. Even *taval*, however, by no means uniformly means to plunge or dip. The LXX. render it in Gen. xxxvii. 31 by *moluno*, which, according to Liddle and Scott, never means to dip, but always "to stain, to sully, to defile, to sprinkle." *Moluno* is used three times in the New Testament (1 Cor. viii. 7; Rev. iii. 4; xiv. 4), and is always rendered to "defile." The *taval* of 2 Kings v. 14, rendered in our English version "dipped," is translated by the LXX. "baptized." Thus we see these seventy Greek scholars sometimes translating *taval* by *baptizo* and sometimes by *moluno*, "to sprinkle." I imagine they knew their own language at least as well as the Baptists and Disciples of the present day.

Did it ever occur to you, Mr. Editor, that all the washings, cleansings, purifyings of the ritual of the Old Testament were enacted, commanded, and first practised during the forty years' sojourn of Israel in the wilderness, where there was often such a scarcity of water that the people came near perishing for want of water to drink; and at least two miracles were performed by the direction of the Lord to supply water for drinking purposes; and where, on as many as two occasions, they had to buy water for their necessities? (see Exod. xvii. 1-7; Num. xx. 5-19; xxi. 5; xxxiii. 14; Deut. ii. 6; viii. 15). Now, amidst all this dearth and scarcity of water, even for drinking, the laws requiring water-cleansing as a religious rite were enacted and daily practised for years without any inconvenience. And yet, during these long years of scarcity of water in the wilderness, immersionists are compelled by their theory, derived from and supported by the Romish Church, to imagine the people dipping, immersing and dabbling every day in the water.

The essential thing in the purification of the law was performed by sprinkling, and hence we read: "Because the water of separation was not sprinkled upon him, he shall be unclean; his uncleanness is yet upon him" (Num. xix. 13). In Ecclesiasticus xxxiv. 23, this very rite of cleansing from the defilement consequent upon contact with the dead, spoken of in Num. xix. 13, and performed by sprinkling, is called baptism. And this itself distinctly proves that at least 200 years B.C. the rite of purification by sprinkling was by the Jews called baptism.

In at least thirty places in the Old Testament we have purification by sprinkling. And Paul (Heb. ix. 10) speaks of these symbol purifications as "divers baptisms," and in verses 13, 19, 21, he specifies some of these baptisms.

Where God says, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25), he uses the words "sprinkle" and "cleanse" as synonymous. And yet you, Mr. Editor, affirm that for me to say that the religious use of water is to "symbolize the Spirit's work in purifying the soul by applying the blood of sprinkling," is without proof! Why, sir, if you open your Bible at John iii. 25, 26, you will find that a dispute about baptism is expressly said to have been a dispute about purification.

Again, in Luke xi. 38-41 you will read that a certain Pharisee invited the Saviour to dine with him; "and he went in and sat down to meat; and when the Pharisee saw it he marvelled that he had not washed (*ebaptisthe, baptised*) before dinner." "And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean (*katharisete, purify*) the outside of the cup and the platter," etc. "But rather give alms," . . . "and behold all things are clean (*kathara, pure*), unto you."

Let the candid reader examine this passage, and then say whether baptism is not here a purification. Will you, Mr. Editor, tell me what this passage means: "Sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. x. 22)? And this other: "So shall He sprinkle many nations" (Isa. lii. 15)?