

be used, and should answer the purpose completely; "ye shall be clean."—From the moment that Ezekiel's prophecy was published the Church of God had good ground for believing that baptism by sprinkling of adults and infants, of both sexes, with clean water would be the privilege of the New Testament times, and, as both prophets mention only the baptism of persons, they hint, and not obscurely, that all other baptisms should cease.

Let me quote the prophets once more that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." Malachi, the last of them and the nearest to the time of the Messiah, foretells his coming (chap iii.) and that he should sit as a purifier, or baptizer, and should baptize the sons of Levi. How then did the law direct the Levites to be baptized? Sprinkling was a part of it. Numb. viii. 6, 7. God said to Moses, "take the Levites,—and cleanse (baptize) them. And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse (baptize) them, sprinkle water of purifying (baptism) upon them." Does Malachi hint that the Messiah should change this sprinkling into immersion. No. I see not the least hint of future immersion in any of the prophets. And yet, if such a great change were to accompany the New Dispensation, it is strange that no hint of it should be found in any of the prophets. "Surely the Lord God will do nothing but he revealeth his secret unto the prophets."

I come now to John the Baptist. He was the link that connected the Testaments together; a fit person for changing the complex baptisms of the Old into the simple baptism of the New. He appeared as a Reformer of the Church in a backsliding time, preparing the way for the Messiah, and introducing his kingdom, under which the temporary institutions of the Old Testament were abolished, and the permanent altered and reformed, to suit his more spiritual and glorious dispensation. To the former belong sacrifices, sabbaths and baptisms; to the latter, preaching, the Sabbath, and baptism. I will advert to them by and by. John introduced an alteration in the materials of baptism, and in the occasion of its administration, and baptized perhaps more than any who preceded him, on which accounts he had the surname of Baptist. When the reader thinks of it he should also think of the cleansings or purifications of the Levites at law, and in his mind call him John the Purifier. Or what is nearly the same, when he calls him Baptist he should in his mind call those cleansings and purifications baptisms, as Paul does.

It appears plain to me from the voices of the prophets that nobody would have expected him to immerse, and that his sprinkling of adults and infants would be expected by all who expected him to be a Baptist. Let the reader bear in mind that he appeared among a people totally unacquainted with immersion of persons, having never heard of it as a religious ordinance, but daily accustomed to the sprinkling of men, women and infants, which sprinkling was called baptism by that part of them who spoke the Greek language, a part still increasing. If John's baptism was by immersion, and comprised adults only, it proves a great and sudden revolution in the Church, respecting an ordinance of no small importance, and it is passing strange that it should nowhere be mentioned by an inspired writer. If the baptism of John (and of Christ) be a continuation of the Old Testament baptism mentioned above, or built upon it, then we need not look for an institution of it, because there it must be supposed that it is already known. Its practice only will be recited. But if it be wholly a new thing we must expect to see its institution with the directions necessary for its due observation. I wish the reader to mark with care on which of these two the narratives of the