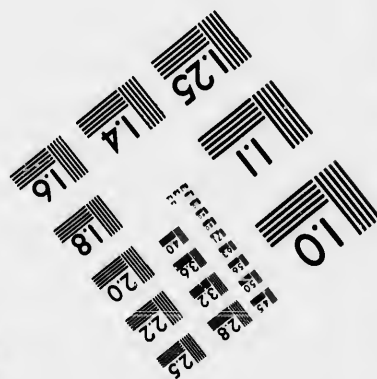
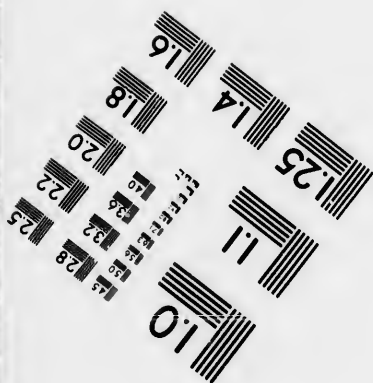
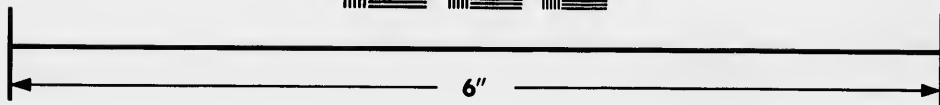
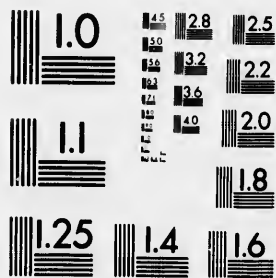


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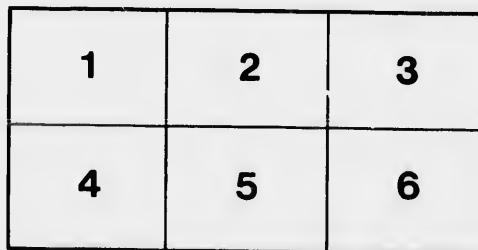
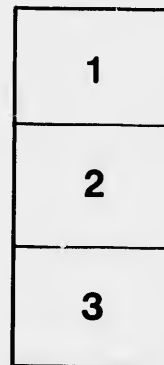
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INFANT BAPTISM SCRIPTURAL;

AND

IMMERSION UNNECESSARY.

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WITH AN APPENDIX ON RE-BAPTIZING.

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BY THE REV. JOHN HANNAH.

TORONTO:

PRINTED AND PUBLISHED AT THE WESLEYAN BOOK-ROOM,  
KING STREET EAST.

1868.

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following pages are designed for the benefit of two classes of people,—those who are desirous of information on the subjects of which they treat ; and those who are in doubt as to whether their own baptism, in infancy, and by sprinkling, be valid.

The Pamphlet is intended chiefly, though not exclusively, for the benefit of the young.

J. H.



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INFANT BAPTISM SCRIPTURAL;  
AND IMMERSION UNNECESSARY.

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A FULL examination of baptism, the initiatory rite of the New Covenant, would require a volume, rather than a few pages. But we limit ourselves to the two points indicated in the title, because it is in regard to these that many young people, who have been baptized in infancy, are most frequently disturbed by the plausible, but unsound, reasonings of their over-zealous neighbours. Our sole object is self-defence. Much more might be said, even on the two questions to which our observations are confined; but the considerations about to be advanced are sufficient, we think, to convince any unprejudiced person that infant baptism, administered either by sprinkling or pouring, is perfectly valid; and that there is no Scriptural warrant for limiting the ordinance to adult believers.

We proceed, then, to the consideration of the **MODE** of baptism.

We are told that "the word *baptism* means dipping, and nothing else." But this is not correct, as we shall take occasion to show. But supposing it were correct, how would it prove that we are confined to this method of baptizing, unless we employ a form of argument which would prove it wrong to take the Lord's Supper at any

time but at night? Unquestionably, our Lord instituted this sacrament in "the same *night* in which He was betrayed." Indeed, the element of time is implied in its very name. And yet the Baptists have no hesitation about receiving the "Lord's *Supper*" in a *morning*. How do they justify their conduct? How easy would it be to say, reasoning on their own principle, "*Supper* signifies an *evening* meal, and nothing but an evening meal; and therefore we are bound to receive this ordinance only at night!" The proper answer, of course, is, that *time* is not essential to the ordinance; and therefore if, in a proper spirit, we partake of bread and wine in commemoration of Christ's death, we are allowed to consult our own convenience in regard to time, and to observe this sacrament either morning, noon, or night. We accept the answer as perfectly satisfactory. It is the only answer that either a Baptist or any one else could give, to justify his conduct in receiving the Lord's *Supper* in a *morning*. But will not the same principle establish the validity of sprinkling, or pouring in baptism, even on the admission that the word primarily refers to dipping? We are told that *mode* is implied in the very name of the initiatory rite; that *to baptize* means "to dip, and nothing else." Now, suppose this were true, (which it is not,) might we not reply, "Is *mode* more deeply engrained in the word 'baptism' than *time* in the word 'supper?'" If, then, our common sense enables us to perceive that the element of *time* in the Lord's *Supper* is not essential to the ordinance,—and if our Christian liberty allows us to eliminate it, and partake of the sacrament of the *Supper* at any time of the day,—why should we not be allowed, on the same principle, to eliminate the element of *mode* in regard to baptism, and to

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consult our convenience or the climate, by administering the rite either by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion? The man who insists on immersion as the only valid mode of baptism, on the ground that *mode* is inseparably connected with the meaning of the word, ought, in order to be consistent, to insist that, as *supper* means an evening meal, and nothing else, every one is bound to receive the sacrament of the Supper *at night only*; and that the man who partakes of bread and wine, professedly to commemorate the love of Christ in dying for him, even in the most grateful and confiding spirit, at any other time than evening, does not really receive this holy sacrament.

Hitherto we have proceeded on the admission that *dipping* is the synonyme of *baptism*; and have proved that, even if it were so, immersion cannot be regarded as essential to the validity of the rite; unless we reason on a principle which would make it unlawful for a man to receive the Lord's Supper at any other time but at night.

We now take other ground, and affirm that dipping is *not* the synonyme of baptism; that the term is used in many cases, both in the New Testament and in the Greek Classics, in which we are quite certain that there was, and could be, no dipping.

The advocates of immersion are very fond of appealing to the Greek Classics, in proof of their statement that "*baptism* means dipping, and nothing else." Dr. Carson says, "I begin with the Classics, and end with the Classics at the time of the institution." It may be well enough to "*begin* with the Classics;" but why "*end* with the Classics?" Have the writers of the New Testament no right to be heard on this question? Or did the Doctor shrewdly conjecture, that he would be able to make out

his case more plausibly from the Greek Classics than from the New Testament? But, to let that pass for the present, we ask, What would be the real weight of the argument from the Classics, even if it entirely favoured immersion? Suppose its advocates could produce even hundreds of passages from heathen Greek writings, in which the words rendered *baptism* and *baptize* were used in the sense of dipping; and that their opponents were unable to adduce a single exception to this usage; would this settle the question, proving that we are wrong, and that they are right? If an affirmative answer be given, we ask,—Is, then, the meaning of a term in the Greek Classics to settle absolutely, and in all cases, its New Testament signification? Surely no one would affirm, that because a Greek word bore a certain meaning in the writings of Homer, this must therefore be its precise meaning in the Epistles of St. Paul! Unquestionably, the writers of the New Testament conveyed information which had not previously been communicated by the heathen Greeks. But how *could* they convey this new information, unless they either coined new words, or used existing words in a new or modified sense? Surely the Greek words which are rendered by the English terms *law*, *repentance*, *justification*, *sanctification*, *angel*, *spirit*, and many more, are not to be understood as bearing *precisely* the same meaning in the New Testament which they bear in the writings of the heathen poets and philosophers. Who would admit such a principle of interpretation? Then, if even the Greek words which are rendered *baptism* and *baptize* were invariably employed in the Classics to signify dipping, it would not follow, as a matter of course, that the New

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Testament writers had employed them in this sense, and in no other.

Dr. Carson affirms that the Greek word βαπτίζω, "BAPTIZO," wherever it occurs, denotes *to dip*, from which meaning it never, in the slightest degree, departs. "In the Classics it denotes *to dip*, in the Scriptures it denotes *to dip*, and in the Fathers it denotes nothing but *to dip*." This is a bold statement, unquestionably; but it is simply untrue, as we shall see presently. We shall come to the New Testament by-and-by; but for the present we have only to do with the statement as it affects the Classics. It does not require extensive quotation in order to refute these strong words: a *single* example of a contrary usage is obviously enough to destroy the entire theory.

Let it be remembered that *to dip* means to move the subject, and plunge him into the baptizing element. There cannot be a case of dipping when the baptizing element is poured on the subject, even though it should overwhelm him. In dipping, the *subject* is moved to the *element*, not the element to the subject; he is baptized *in* it, not *with* it.

With this explanation, we proceed to furnish two cases from the Classics (it would be easy to furnish many more) in which there was *baptism* but *no dipping*. An ancient Greek author (Diodorus Siculus) says, "The greater portion of the land-animals overtaken by the river perish, being baptized." In this passage he is speaking of the extensive destruction of cattle caused by the sudden overflowing of the river Nile. Here, then, is a clear case of baptism without dipping; for the animals were not *put into* the water, but the water *rushed upon* them. Take just another. Aristotle speaks of the sea-shore as being baptized by the advancing tide. Now how was this done?

Plainly the water came upon the beach. Surely the beach did not go into the water. In this case, then, there was baptism, but no dipping.

We have seen that baptism and dipping have not always been fast friends ; that they are not always found in company, even in the writings of the ancient Greeks. Let us now see whether *baptism* and *dipping* are synonyms in the writings of the New Testament ; and whether, therefore, "the command to baptize must be interpreted to mean a command to dip." This is a far more important branch of the argument than that which we have just disposed of. What we want to know is, not so much the sense in which the ancient Greeks employed the word, as the sense in which it is used in the New Testament. The limits which we have assigned to ourselves will not admit of our dwelling at length on this point ; otherwise it would be quite easy to produce a great number of texts in which the word *baptism* is applied to cases where we are absolutely certain that there could have been no dipping. *One* clear case would be quite enough for our argument ; but we shall adduce two.

The first passage is 1 Cor. x. 1, 2 : "Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea ; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea." In what *manner* the Israelites "were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" may be a matter of dispute ; but that they *were* baptized is certain, for St. Paul states that they were ; though he says not a word as to the mode. Let us therefore refer to the account given by Moses of the passage through the sea, with

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a view to ascertain whether it supplies us with any information as to the mode in which they were baptized. From that account we learn, with absolute certainty, that they were *not dipped*. Indeed, it would be barbarous and unmeaning to substitute *dip* for *baptize*, and say that "they were dipped unto Moses." But why not, if, as is affirmed, *dipping* is a synonyme of *baptism*? Here, then, we have a clear case of baptism *without dipping*; for Paul says that the Israelites were *baptized*, and Moses says that they were *not dipped*. This passage has given the advocates of dipping great trouble, and they have offered various expositions of it, (some of them curious enough,) with a view to get rid of the difficulty. Dr. Gill supposes that the sea stood above their heads, and that "they seemed to be immersed in it." "*Seemed to be immersed.*" Then he admits that they were *not really* immersed, after all; so that according to this explanation they must have had a "dry baptism." Dr. Carson says that "the sea stood on each side, and the cloud covered them." We wonder where he got his *facts*: not from Moses, we are sure. How the learned Doctor could imagine that he had made it out, by this curious exposition, (even allowing him his facts,) that the Israelites had received a real *dip* at the passage of the Red Sea, we cannot imagine. According to this exposition, they merely walked through a tunnel, the sides of which were formed by water, and the top by the cloud,—a "dry baptism" still. Now whether we can give any satisfactory explanation of the *mode* in which the Israelites "were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea," or not, is quite immaterial to our argument; the design of which is to prove that there may be *baptism without dipping*. In regard to the pas-



sage through the sea, we learn two or three facts from the narrative of Moses and from the 77th Psalm, which, in the opinion of some, may possibly throw some light on the question of *mode*. From Moses we learn that there was a "a strong wind;" and from the Psalm, that there was a thunder-storm, accompanied by heavy rain, during the passage. Then should we not be warranted in saying that the Israelites were baptized with the spray from the sea, and with the heavy rain which fell from the cloud? —which would be baptism by sprinkling, or, at most, pouring; not dipping, certainly. We care but little whether this exposition be accepted or rejected. Indeed, any attempt to expound the *mode* is on our part quite a work of supererogation; not adding the slightest weight to our argument, even if deemed entirely satisfactory. Will any one, then, who defers to the authority of Holy Scripture, venture to affirm, when a person has been solemnly sprinkled with water in the name of the Holy Trinity, that he has *not* been baptized, merely because he has not been *dipped*? If so, his controversy is with St. Paul, not with us; for Paul says that the Israelites were baptized, and we are quite sure from the history that they were *not dipped*.

On the day of Pentecost there was *baptism*, but certainly not *dipping*. This great event was predicted by our Lord's forerunner, at an early period of his ministry, in the following terms: "I indeed baptize you with water; but He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." St. Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, has recorded the accomplishment of this prediction, in the following words: "And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And sud-

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denly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them." Was this, then, a real baptism? Unquestionably it was; for it is admitted on all hands that it was the fulfilment of John's prediction, "He shall *baptize* you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire." Then how were the disciples "*baptized* with the Holy Ghost, and with fire?" Were they *dipped* in the Holy Ghost, or *plunged* into the fire? The mere naming of such an absurdity, is its own refutation. The significant emblem of "fire" was employed to denote the purifying and quickening influences of the Holy Spirit; just as the water in baptism is the symbol of our spiritual purification: but certainly they were not *dipped* in the emblem; for it descended and "*sat upon each of them.*" Now if the disciples received a real valid baptism "*with fire,*" although they were not *dipped* in it, may not a man have received a real valid baptism *with water,* when he has not been *dipped in it,* but sprinkled *with it?* It is impossible for any amount of ingenuity to make it appear that there was dipping on the day of Pentecost; and yet we must admit there was a real *baptism* "with fire:" otherwise we shall make out our Lord's forerunner to have been a false prophet; for if his prediction was not fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, it was not fulfilled at all.

It would be quite easy to produce many more passages from the New Testament in proof of our position that *baptism* and *dipping* are not synonyms; but it is unnecessary, and we cannot afford the space.

We proceed now to another branch of our argument, and affirm that the entire New Testament does not furnish a single clear case of baptism by *dipping*. The proof of this statement, however, although it will serve to strengthen our argument, is not at all necessary to its conclusiveness. Its omission would not be leaving out the key-stone of the arch, but simply leaving the building a few inches lower. We may go even further, and affirm, that if it could be shown, beyond a doubt, that baptism in the times of our Lord and His apostles was *invariably* administered by dipping,—this would not at all invalidate that branch of our argument in which we have clearly proved that *baptism* and *dipping* are not synonymous, but would merely imply that dipping is a valid mode of administering the ordinance,—a point on which we are all quite agreed.

Did John, then, baptize by dipping? It is confidently affirmed that he did, because it is said that he “baptized *in* Jordan.” Now, were we even to admit that the subjects of John’s baptism went into the water, (which is far from certain,) how would it follow from this admission that they were *dipped*? If a man rides his horse *into* the water, does that imply that he plunges him over head and ears in it? *May* it not mean merely that he rides him in a few inches deep, for the convenience of letting him drink? The Jordan, as is well known, had a double bank, an inner and an outer. The stream was confined within the inner bank, except at the time of the annual overflow, caused by the melting of the snow on Mount Lebanon, when it reached to the outer. The expression “*in* Jordan,” then, ought not to have any great stress laid upon it; for it *may* mean no more than that John arranged

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his converts along the edge of the stream, within the bed of the river, for the convenience of sprinkling them with the water; or, at most, pouring it upon them. There is a sect of Christians in the East who call themselves "the followers of John the Baptist, who was the follower of Christ," and who baptize "*in rivers*," professedly in imitation of his example. But they do *not dip*. Their practice is to hold the infant near the surface of the water, while they sprinkle him with it. While so much stress is laid by our opponents on the statement, that "John baptized *in Jordan*," how does it happen that they ignore that other passage in which John describes himself as "baptizing *with water*?" Baptizing *with water* is both sense and grammar; but *dipping with water* would be nonsense.

But why did John take up his station at the Jordan, and why did he select "Enon," where there was "much water," if he did not baptize by dipping? Only reflect on the vast multitudes who attended John's ministry, many of whom came from distant places, and that they did not receive baptism and then retire immediately, but remained, some of them probably for a considerable time, for the purpose of receiving instruction from his ministry,—and you will have a satisfactory answer to this question. If John had merely preached and not baptized at all, it would have been necessary for him to take up his station in some neighbourhood where water was plentiful. Christians of different denominations in America are accustomed to hold their camp-meetings in the neighbourhood of some stream or river; but would any one infer from this that they are accustomed to baptize by *dipping*?

But suppose we admit that John selected "Jordan" and

“Enon” mainly for the convenience of having water to baptize with, it would not follow that he baptized by *dipping*. If a minister in the present day were as popular as John the Baptist, and were to baptize, by sprinkling or pouring, vast multitudes, say the entire population of one of our large counties, would he not find it necessary to select a spot where water was abundant? In Palestine water was very scarce: the Jordan was the only stream that deserved the name of a river, the rest were mere mountain-torrents. Then if John had merely sprinkled or poured a little water on each of his numerous converts, he would have found it a great convenience to have plenty of water at hand, even if it had been required for no other purpose than that of baptism. As to “Enon,” and its “*much* water, on which so much stress has been laid, it is quite certain, from the face of the country, as described by travellers, that it never did furnish such a quantity of water as John would have required for *dipping*. Biblical critics are agreed that the phrase rendered in our version, “*much* water,” properly means “*many* waters,” that is to say, many springs. Now, if John baptized by pouring a little water from a vessel on the head of each convert, according to the representation in ancient bas-reliefs, then the “many springs of Enon would have furnished him with all the water that he needed; but they would have been altogether inadequate to supply him with the quantity of water that he would have required to *dip* so large a number.

That John baptized his converts by dipping is utterly *incredible*. How any man who has reflected on the circumstances of the case can believe that he did, is astonishing. Did John dip his converts in a state of *nudity*,

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or in their ordinary garments? Decency would forbid the former, and a due regard to health and life the latter. Then did they come furnished with bathing-dresses? Many of them, when they left home, had not the slightest intention of being baptized. They went, doubtless, influenced only by motives of curiosity, in many cases, to hear the popular preacher, and never thought of receiving baptism until they had been awakened by his powerful ministry. Bathing-dresses, then, in such cases, were out of the question. But suppose (though it is violating all probability) that the people came furnished with the requisite bathing-dresses, where could they undress and dress? On the banks of the river? men and women together! Who could believe this? especially considering the retiring habits of Eastern women.

That John baptized his converts by dipping is, as we have seen, utterly incredible. We now advance another step in the argument, and say that it was *physically impossible*. The precise number baptized by John cannot, of course, be ascertained; but the language of Scripture intimates that it was very large. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him." Some have estimated John's converts at two millions. Perhaps this estimate is too high. Mr. Godwin's estimate is three hundred thousand; which is certainly sufficiently low; and yet he shows that the *dipping* of this number by one man would have taken twelve years. Now, when it is remembered that John baptized personally, and not "by his disciples," as our Lord did, and that his ministry only lasted a year, at the longest, (some say only six months,) it will be seen that it was physically impossible for him to have *dipped* a

title of his converts, even if he had been able to live as comfortably in the water as on land.

We might dwell on the baptism of the three thousand on the day in Pentecost, and show that it would have been physically impossible for the apostles to have *dipped* this large number; and that, even if they had been physically adequate to the task, it is not credible that they could have obtained sufficient water in a city where it was so scarce that, according to Josephus, it was sold to the people in separate measures. But we pass over this case without further notice, and for want of space omit several others which would have strengthened our argument.

We come now to the great passage of the immersionists, that which they regard as their sheet-anchor (or at least one of them) in this controversy,—the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip. “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip.” (Acts viii. 38, 39.) Was this, then, a clear case of baptism by *dipping*? It is affirmed that it was; but let us examine it. They went “*into* the water,” and came up “*out of* the water,” are the words which are supposed to prove that this was a case of dipping. Almost every one knows that the words rendered, respectively, “*into*” and “*out of*,” might have been rendered, in equal harmony with the original, “*to*” and “*from*,” and that, in fact, they are very often thus translated in our English version. Now, if we take this rendering, (and we *have a right* to take it if we choose,) there is no proof that they went into the water at all; they might merely have gone to the water’s edge. But we do not insist on this rendering; for we feel that in this controversy we

can well afford to be liberal. Let us keep, then, to the authorized version, "into" and "out of." How does it appear, from these words, that the eunuch was *dipped*? They *might* go "into" the water only ankle-deep, to enable Philip the more conveniently to lift up some of it in his hand, and pour it on the head of his convert. Certainly it cannot be said that the word *necessarily* means more than this. But if it be insisted upon that the words "into" and "out of" must mean *immersion* and *emersion*, (though no proof of this is furnished,) then, as nothing is said of the eunuch in relation to them that is not said of Philip, the passage would prove that the eunuch was dipped *three times*, and Philip *twice*! "They went down both *into* the water,"—*both dipped*; "and he baptized him,"—Philip dipped the eunuch: and "they came up," both of them, "*out of* the water,"—Philip and the eunuch *emerged*, which implies of necessity that they had been previously *submerged*. Thus, if we concede all that is asked in regard to the meaning of "into" and "out of," we fear that the passage will prove rather inconvenient to our friends, by establishing a good deal more than they wish. It is impossible, as we have seen, to prove that the eunuch was *dipped at all*, without proving at the same time that he was dipped *thrice* and Philip *twice*. Are our opponents, then, prepared to stick to this passage as a proof of baptism by dipping? If so, they must take the consequences; which, besides showing their own practice to be defective, would place a solemn religious ordinance in a very ludicrous light.

We cannot but think that correct views respecting the nature of baptism as a symbolical rite (of course it is *more* than a symbol, but with that we have nothing to do at



present) would speedily settle the vexed question of MODE, by showing that *dipping* cannot be essential to its validity. That baptism is a symbolical rite, is admitted by all. Water is a purifier, and its use in baptism symbolizes our purification from the defilement of sin by the Holy Spirit. Moral purification is the "inward and spiritual grace" signified by the "outward and visible sign." Now where is the symbol? In the *water*, or in the *mode* of its application? It must be either in the one or the other: it cannot be in *both*; for that, as will be seen on reflection, would sometimes produce confusion in our conceptions, besides being inadmissible on other grounds. If it is said that the symbol is in the *mode*, and that therefore the only right mode is immersion, we must demur, and ask what does immersion symbolize? To this it is said, it symbolizes our "burial with Christ," according to a passage in the Epistle to the Romans, where St. Paul says, "We are buried with Him by baptism." But the believer's "burial with Christ" is obviously not a literal truth, but a figurative mode of expressing his "death unto sin." And baptism, according to Dr. Curson himself, cannot be the symbol of a figure; it can only be the symbol of a truth. Some few have maintained that sprinkling and pouring are the *only* valid modes of baptism; and that immersion is altogether unwarrantable, on the ground that it cannot symbolize the "pouring out of the Holy Spirit." To this Dr. Curson replies, "Pouring of the Spirit is a phrase which is itself a figure, not a reality to be represented by a figure." This reply is correct; and proves that to set up exclusive claims in favour of sprinkling or pouring, is unwarrantable. We wonder, however, that the Doctor did not perceive that his argument, while refuting the narrowness which would re-

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strict us to sprinkling or pouring, was equally valid against the narrowness which would restrict us to immersion. He says that sprinkling or pouring cannot symbolize the pouring of the Spirit, because that is only a figurative mode of representing the bestowment of the Spirit's influences. Then may it not be said, with equal truth, immersion cannot symbolize our burial with Christ, because "that is a phrase which is itself a figure, not a reality to be represented by a figure?" If the argument is valid against the man who advocates exclusive sprinkling or pouring, on the ground that the mode is symbolical, it must be equally valid against the man who, on the very same ground, advocates exclusive immersion. Dr. Carson is so thoroughly satisfied with his argument against the advocates of exclusive sprinkling or pouring, that he thinks "it must settle the point for ever with all sober men." Let us look at the great principle of this argument. Does it not prove, most conclusively, that in baptism the symbol must be in the water, and that it cannot be in the mode of its application? For in whatever way you use water in baptism, whether you sprinkle, pour, or immerse, you cannot regard the mode as symbolical without making it the symbol of a figure. Immersion symbolizes no truth, and can symbolize none. And this is equally true of sprinkling or pouring. However the water may be applied in baptism, the symbol is in it, not in the mode of using it. We cordially thank Dr. Carson for his argument: let it only be carried out to its logical consequences by all parties, and we ask no more. For as soon as it is admitted that water, not dipping, nor pouring, nor sprinkling, is the symbol, the controversy as to mode must be at an end "with all sober men;" for it

will be seen that a small quantity is just as good, as a symbol, as a tankful, or a river.

Here, then, we close our observations on the mode of baptism. We have proved, even on the admission that baptism means dipping, that, if our Christian liberty allows us to eliminate the element of time in regard to the Lord's Supper, on the same principle we are allowed to eliminate the element of mode in regard to baptism, and to administer it by sprinkling or pouring, rather than by immersion, if on any ground we prefer doing so. We have proved that *baptism* and *dipping* are not synonymous in the Greek Classics; and that even if they were, we should still have to inquire, "What saith the Scripture?" From the New Testament we have adduced passages in which the word *baptism* is applied to cases in which we are quite sure there could not have been immersion. We have shown, too, that there is no evidence from the New Testament of the immersion of a single individual, either by John the Baptist, or by any of the apostles or evangelists; and this we have done by an examination of those passages which are supposed most strongly to favour the views of our opponents. And, lastly, we have proved from the symbolical nature of the rite, that immersion, which symbolizes nothing, and can symbolize nothing, cannot be essential to its validity. Such is a brief summary of our argument.

We now leave the question of mode, and proceed to inquire, "Who are the proper SUBJECTS of baptism?"

Our warrant for administering baptism to any is founded on the apostolic commission, "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to

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observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.)\* The question is, how would the persons to whom this commission was originally given be likely to understand it?

There can be no doubt that they would understand their commission to mean, as far as adults were concerned, that they were to preach the Gospel to them, instructing them in the doctrines and duties of Christianity; and that when any one was so convinced of the claims of Jesus, as to receive Him as the Messiah and the Son of God, and was willing and anxious to identify himself with the Christian church, they were at once to baptize him, and thereby admit him to the privileges of church-membership. The entire apostolic practice, as far as it can be ascertained from the Acts and Epistles, appears to have been in perfect harmony with this statement. This, too, is the practice of modern missionaries belonging to all sections of the Christian church, Pædobaptists and Antipædobaptists are quite agreed here. It is somewhat gratifying, in this wide field of strife, to find a spot of ground which the combatants occupy in common, and in regard to which they have no controversy.

But how would the apostles be likely to understand their Master's commission in regard to the children of their converts who had not arrived at years of accountability? Would they be likely to understand our Lord's words to mean that they should baptize only adults; and that infants and young children, although their parents had embraced Christianity, were to be denied the rite of baptism, on the ground that they were not capable of believing? Those who in modern times deny baptism to infants, do it on the

\* See also Mark xvi. 15, 16.

avowed ground that personal faith, according to their view of the commission as given by St. Mark, is essential to the validity of the rite. And as it is admitted, on all hands, that infants are incapable of believing, it is maintained that their baptism is not valid. We shall have something to say in reply to this statement by-and-by ; but our only object at present is to endeavour to ascertain whether the apostles would be likely to interpret their commission in this restricted sense.

In what relation did the children of the native Jews, and the children of the proselytes from heathenism, stand to the Jewish church ? Circumcision was the initiatory rite of the Abrahamic covenant,—the door of entrance into the Jewish church ; just as baptism is now the mode of admission to the Christian church. Then was this rite administered only to adult Jews and proselytes, and denied to their infant children ? Circumcision was a symbolical rite : it had a moral signification very similar to that of baptism ; it signified, not the “ putting away of the filth of the flesh,” (it was that literally,) but the purification of the heart from the impurity of sin ; just as water in baptism is symbolical of spiritual purification. Now it would have been quite easy to say, “ Infants are incapable of understanding the moral meaning of circumcision ;” (which would have been true ; ) “ then why administer it to them ? What good can it do them ?” Of course, we do not mean to intimate that any Jew in those times could have been guilty of such absurd reasoning, in the very teeth of the Divine command, which required the infant children, both of Jews and proselytes, to be circumcised. But we *do* say that the reasoning, in regard to the qualification of the subjects, would have been just as valid against the circumcision of infants, as it

is against their baptism. Our point, therefore, is, that the apostles, being Jews, and consequently familiar with the circumcision of infants, would not be likely so to interpret their commission to baptize, as to restrict the rite to adult believers, and deny it to their infant children, on the ground that they were not capable of believing. Must not every unprejudiced person admit that, to say the least, the apostles would be likely to interpret their commission to baptize in the light of the Divine command in regard to circumcision? And as they knew that the infants, both of native Jews and proselytes, were admitted into the Jewish church, and received the rite of circumcision by the command of God, would they not be likely to interpret their commission in the wide sense, and conclude that the infant children of Christians were to be admitted into the church by baptism? If this would have been an error, it was an error into which, under the circumstances, they would have been morally certain to fall; an error from which nothing could have preserved them but an express injunction from their Master, telling them *not* to baptize infants. Let any reflecting man say, which view of the commission the apostles, with their Jewish training, would be likely to adopt; whether the wide view, which would include infants,—or the narrow view, which would exclude them? But if we suppose, in violation of all the laws of probability, that the apostles took the restricted view, and refused to admit into the church, by baptism, the infant children of those who embraced Christianity, is it credible that this would have occasioned no demur!—that *all* the Jewish converts, though their children had been admitted into the Jewish church by circumcision, would have submitted, without a murmur, to their exclusion from the Christian church, by their being

refused its initiatory rite? Now, in the Acts and the Epistles we find traces of many controversies in the early churches; but not the slightest trace of controversy in regard to the baptism of infants. This fact is easily accounted for, on the supposition that the apostles so interpreted their commission as to include the infant children of their converts, but is utterly inexplicable on the supposition that they were excluded.

All that is said in the "Acts" respecting the practice of the apostles and their coadjutors, in regard to baptism, is quite in harmony with the view which we have proved to be the only credible one,—that they took the wide, and not the restricted, view of their commission. It is quite true that we do not read expressly of their baptizing infants: if we are right in our previous reasoning, they would do this as a matter of course, without making any special record of it, which is the practice of our modern missionaries. We do read, however, of the baptism of entire "households;" (an argument in our favour which we shall afterwards dwell on at greater length;) and it would be an assumption altogether incredible, that none of the numerous heads of families, which were converted in apostolic times, had any infant children.

Well, but it is said, that the commission is our only guide; that it plainly restricts the rite of baptism to believers; and therefore necessarily excludes infants, who are not capable of believing. Those who take this ground must, of course, take all its logical consequences. Let us see what they are.

This argument, then, if it has any force at all, will not only exclude infants from baptism, but also from salvation. If the expression in the commission, "he that *believeth* and

is baptized," be interpreted to mean, that *believing* is in all cases an essential pre-requisite to baptism; then that other expression, which is also in the commission, "he that believeth not shall be damned," if interpreted on the same principle, must mean, "Believing is in all cases an essential pre-requisite to escaping damnation: but infants do not believe; therefore they will certainly be damned." Every man ought to be prepared to take the logical consequences of his own principles. Are those persons, then, who deny baptism to infants, because they are not believers, prepared to adopt the horrible conclusion to which this principle logically leads? Observe, we do not charge them with actually holding the opinion that infants will be damned; on the contrary, we know that their whole nature instinctively revolts from the horrible notion. But we do charge their restricted interpretation of our Lord's commission with leading logically to this conclusion. Let them point out the flaw in the reasoning, if there be one. But if, on the contrary, the connexion between the premisses and the conclusion be logically sound, let them, for the sake of consistency, as they abhor the conclusion, give up the premisses which clearly warrant it.

Our opponents, however, hold very firmly to the words in the commission, "He that *believeth* and is baptized," and maintain that they leave no room for infants, as they sanction only the baptism of *believers*. Dr. Carson says, "I would gainsay an angel from heaven, who should say that this commission may extend to the baptism of any but believers." But let us try the *practice* of such men as Dr. Carson by their own avowed principle. Do they, then, really and practically hold that no baptism is valid unless the subject is a believer? A man presents himself for bap-



tism, professing to be a believer ; and on that profession the rite is administered, and he is received into the church. But are they never deceived in regard to such professions ? Are the persons who make them invariably genuine believers ? Mr. Campbell, of America, a Baptist writer, confesses that, "in nine cases out of ten, through error of judgment, they admit unbelievers." "In nine cases out of ten !" Why, this amounts to a wholesale violation of our Lord's commission, as they interpret it. But when they have, "through error of judgment," baptized a man on his profession of faith, and ascertain afterwards that he was, at the very time of his baptism, a vile hypocrite, instead of a true believer, do they not amend the error by re-baptizing him, when the man afterwards repents of his wickedness, and gives every possible proof that he is now a genuine believer ? No, never, in any case. Then what becomes of their assertion that personal faith is essential to the validity of baptism, and that infants' baptism is not valid *because* infants cannot believe ? Either the baptism of the hypocrite was valid or it was not. If not, then they admit unbaptized persons into their churches, and retain them, knowing them to be unbaptized. But if the baptism *was* valid, and their practice says that in their judgment it was, for they do not repeat it, why do they talk so incessantly about *believers'* baptism, as alone valid, and declaim so confidently, not to say offensively, against the baptism of infants, on the ground that they are not believers ? Is not the practice in flat opposition to the creed ? Surely an innocent infant, who has never been guilty of actual sin, must be a better subject for baptism than a vile hypocrite ! And is it not an absurdity to say, that the baptism of the former was invalid, on account of the unfitness of the subject ;

while in the latter case it was perfectly valid, although the subject was a thousand times more unfit?

Our opponents often make a great mistake, in supposing that the adult baptisms mentioned in the New Testament entirely favour their own views. They not unfrequently point to these, and then ask, in triumph, where we can find a single clear case of infant baptism in apostolic times? Now it would be quite easy to rebut this challenge, by defying the objectors to produce a single case of adult baptism, favouring their own peculiar view, from the entire record of apostolic practice. We say, "favouring their own peculiar view." For what is that view, as stated by their own writers, and confirmed by the uniform practice of their churches? Is it not that the children of church-members should remain unbaptized until they grow up, and make a profession of faith in Christ? Then it is quite irrelevant to point to the adult baptisms mentioned in the New Testament; for they afford not the slightest sanction to this view. Without a solitary exception, they are the baptisms of persons who were trained up either in Judaism or heathenism, and who became converts to Christianity under the preaching of the Gospel. But this simply supports the view which, as we have already stated, is held by ourselves in common with our opponents, and is, therefore, quite irrelevant to the matter in dispute. They contend that it is wrong for Christian parents to present their infant children for baptism; and that in all cases they should remain unbaptized until they have grown up, and make an intelligent profession of faith in Christ. Now where have we, in any of the apostolic writings, any intimation of the baptism of an adult whose parents were Christians at the time of his birth? Not one such case can be found in the entire New

Testament; and yet, as the Acts of the Apostles contain a record of church-history, extending over a period of more than thirty years, dating from the time of our Lord's ascension, there must have been a vast number of children, born of Christian parents, who had arrived at maturity long before the record was finished. How does it happen, then, if the views of our opponents be right, that we have no record of the baptism of any of these children? We are often challenged to produce a single clear case of infant baptism from the New Testament; and if we fail to meet the challenge in a way that is satisfactory to our opponent, he regards the failure as furnishing a clear proof that infant baptism is unwarranted by Scripture. Now let us apply the same principle of reasoning to the view which maintains that the children of professing Christians should not be baptized until they have arrived at adult years. The objector cannot produce from the New Testament a single case of *such* adult baptism. Then, according to his own principle, he must give up his favourite notion of adult baptism; at least, so far as the children of professing Christians are concerned.

We must now refer to the "household" baptisms mentioned in the New Testament. The "household" of Lydia was baptized, when she became a convert. When the jailor believed, he "was baptized, he and all his, straightway." And St. Paul states that he "baptized the household of Stephanas." (Acts xvi. 15, 33; and 1 Cor. i. 16.) Now it is quite easy to *assume* that there were no infants in any of these families; but this is really wide of the point. We care not if it were even *proved*, which it never can be, that in all these cases the families were composed of adults only. Every one must admit, on reflection, that

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the few instances of household baptisms mentioned in the New Testament were not *all* that occurred during the apostolic age. To suppose that they were would be ridiculous, considering the wide and rapid spread of Christianity in apostolic times. Clearly, the few given are only to be regarded as *specimens* of the thousands that are not given. Then will any one venture the supposition, that in all these thousands of households there were no *infants*? If so, we should scarcely think it worth while to argue with him. Well, then, every candid man must admit that, in *many* of the "households" who received baptism, there *were infants*, without doubt. But it may be said, "If there were infants, they were not baptized." This, however, would be an assumption, setting at defiance all the laws of evidence. In what sense would a Jew—familiar with the practice (which was uniform) of circumcising the entire household, including the youngest child, if but eight days old, when the head of the family became a proselyte—understand the "*household*" baptisms mentioned in the New Testament? Can any one doubt, that he would understand the term to include every member of the family? It was impossible that he could put any other construction upon the term. In the Old Testament Scriptures, it is uniformly used in the widest sense. For example, God said unto Noah, "Come thou and all thy *house* into the ark,"—meaning his entire family. "I rent the kingdom away from the *house* of David." "I will bring evil upon the *house* of Jeroboam." "The Lord shall raise up a king who shall cut off the *house* of Jeroboam." The meaning of the term in all these passages (and they are given merely as samples of hundreds more) is plain,—the "house" or "household" was the entire family. Obviously, then, the word must be understood in this wide sense, (for

we have not the slightest authority to narrow its meaning,) when applied to the baptism of Christian "households." It must mean that the heads of the families and their children were baptized. Now, as among the thousands of families who were baptized in apostolic times there must have been infants, we are morally certain that infant baptism was practised by the apostles. The objector must assume, either that there were no infants in any of the baptized "households," or that they were excepted, (and he must make this assumption, not only *without* proof, but in opposition to proofs on the other side, which amount very nearly to mathematical demonstration,) or he must admit that the apostles practised infant baptism.

It will be admitted that, if the infant children of professing Christians may be included in the visible church, they have a right, on that ground, to baptism. That they *may* be thus included, is clear from St. Paul's argument in the eleventh chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. In this argument, the visible church is represented as an olive-tree ; and believers, whether Jews or Gentiles, as branches. The believing Jews are spoken of as "*natural*" branches, who were in the tree by hereditary descent ; the believing Gentiles as "*wild olive*" branches, *grafted* into the same stock, and partaking of the "*root and fatness of the olive-tree* ;" while, on the other hand, the unbelieving Jews are represented as branches "*broken off*,"—broken off on account of their unbelief. The Gentiles are reminded that they were "*grafted in*" by faith, and could only retain their connexion with the olive-tree by continuing to believe ; and are, therefore, solemnly warned against unbelief, which, as it had already "*broken off*" some of the "*natural branches*," would certainly break them off. It is plain, then, from the entire

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argument, that when the Jew became a believer, and thus passed into the Christian church, he was *not* "broken off;" that he did not unchurch himself by becoming a Christian. What, then, became of his children? They, as well as himself, were native branches in the olive-tree; members of the visible church by hereditary descent; and had therefore received the initiatory rite of circumcision. Were they, then, "broken off" when their parent became a Christian? *None* of the Jews were "broken off," except for unbelief; that is, for the rejection of Christ. Now, if the Jewish children, who were certainly native branches in the olive-tree, were "broken off," it could only be either on account of their own unbelief, or the unbelief of their parents. If a Jewish parent rejected Christ, both he and his infant children were thereby unchurched,— "broken off" from the olive-tree. But when the parent was a believer, his children could not, of course, be "broken off" for *his* unbelief. Nor could they be broken off for *their own*; for they were incapable of wilfully rejecting Christ, which was the sin of the unbelieving Jews. Then, clearly, as both the Jews and their children were native branches in the olive-tree,—and, as in the case of those who believed, there was nothing to break off *either*,—when the parent became a member of the Christian church, he carried his children along with him. Besides, would it not be utterly incredible to suppose that, while the parent retained his connexion with the Jewish church, he should have his children along with him, as the recognised members of that church; but that, when he became a Christian, he should be required to enter the church alone, and to leave his children outside of the pale?

And when the Gentiles—the "wild olive" branches—became grafted into the "olive-tree," and partook of its

"root and fatness," did they not, like the Jews, carry their infant offspring along with them? If not, then the Jews had advantages under the Christian system which were denied to the Gentiles. But this would be contrary to the general tenor of the New Testament; which constantly states that the Gentiles were admitted to equal privileges with the Jews. Thus it is clear that as the native Jews who believed, and who, with their children, were natural branches in the "olive-tree," were not "broken off," but simply passed over into the Christian church; so the Gentiles, the "wild olive" branches, when they believed, were grafted into the olive-tree, and, having equal privileges with the Jews, carried their infant offspring along with them. Then, if St. Paul's argument proves anything at all, it proves, most conclusively, that the infant children of those who have embraced Christianity may have a place in the visible church of Christ, and therefore that they have a right to baptism.

Now, if infants have a right to baptism on the ground just stated, how much stronger will be their claim to this ordinance if we can prove also that they have a personal interest in "the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," and are, therefore, if they die in infancy, heirs of future happiness! And this admits of very easy proof. When "they brought little children" to Christ, He rebuked His disciples for wishing to keep them away, and said,—evidently in justification of the conduct of those who brought them,—"Of such is the kingdom of heaven." That the expression, "kingdom of heaven," is to be understood in a spiritual sense, there can be no doubt. Therefore it must mean either the kingdom of grace on earth, comprehending those whom Christ claims as His subjects and servants, in oppo-

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sition to those who belong to the kingdom of Satan ; or else His future kingdom of heavenly glory. It matters not to our argument in which sense the passage is taken. Indeed, we may fairly take it in *both* ; for the one necessarily involves the other. The passage, then, clearly asserts that *all* "little children," not having reached years of accountability, have an interest in Christ, and may be comprehended in His church on earth ; and, consequently, that, dying before the commission of actual sin, they will be admitted into the kingdom of heavenly glory. Or, if we understand the passage as referring, primarily, to their gracious right, through the Saviour's mediation, to future happiness, that would necessarily infer their *present* interest in Him. We have said *all* "little children," because there is not the slightest reason for believing that there was anything *special* in the children brought to Christ to distinguish them from other "little children." On the contrary, the expression, "of *such*," clearly intimates that our Lord pointed to them as a sample of the rest. Then, "can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized," whom Christ designs to be members of His church, and heirs of heavenly happiness ?

We shall now give a brief summary of our argument on this branch of the subject. Our authority to baptize any, infants or adults, is derived from the apostolic commission. In regard to the SUBJECTS of baptism, that commission must either be interpreted in a *wide* sense, which would include infants ; or in a *narrow* sense, which would exclude them. It is utterly incredible that the apostles, with their Jewish training, could have interpreted their commission in the *narrow* sense. Since the infants both of native Jews and proselytes were admitted into the Jewish church by the rite



of circumcision ; if Christ had meant them *not* to baptize the infant children of their converts, they must, unless He had *expressly* prohibited it, have inevitably misunderstood Him. The apostolic practice, as recorded in the Acts, indicates that they understood the commission in its *wide*, and *not* in its *restricted*, sense.

The same principle which would exclude infants from baptism, because they are not believers, would, if carried out to its logical consequences, exclude them also from heaven. Our opponents insist on *believers'* baptism, as the only valid baptism ; but their practice is not in harmony with their creed. Infants are certainly *better* subjects than many whose baptism they, nevertheless, practically regard as perfectly valid. It is absurd to denounce the baptism of infants as invalid *because of the unfitness of the subjects*, while other baptisms, where the subjects were a thousand times more unfit, are considered quite valid, not being repeated. There is not a single example in the New Testament of the baptism of an *adult* whose parents were professing Christians at the time of his birth. The baptism of entire households in apostolic times clearly warrants the conclusion that *infant* baptism was practised by the apostles and their coadjutors. And as infant children are recognised by Christ as those who may justly have a place in His "kingdom" upon earth and in heaven, their right to Christian baptism upon this ground must be admitted.

We would not have it to be understood that we have exhausted the argument. This has not been our aim. On the contrary, we have studied the utmost possible brevity compatible with our design, which has been to convince the gainsayer and to establish the wavering.

We shall bring our observations to a close, with a few remarks on a point of some consequence, but which did not

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come within the range of our argument. It is often said, "Why baptize an *infant*? What good can it possibly do him?" Now, even if we were unable to conceive of any benefit which the infant could derive from the rite, we should, nevertheless, feel it our duty to administer it, because we are satisfied that we have the Divine warrant for doing so. But what right has any one to *assume* that an infant can get no good from baptism? The doctrine of "baptismal regeneration" we reject, of course, as a dangerous error. But almost every error is the perversion of some truth; baptismal regeneration is, we believe, the perversion of an important truth. It is natural for us to think that the farther we can get away from any error the better; that its extreme opposite must be the truth. But this is a mistake. The extreme opposite to "baptismal regeneration" is the lax notion that baptism is a mere matter of form, "giving a name to the child," as is not unfrequently said. But this is not truth, any more than its opposite, "baptismal regeneration." We say nothing now respecting the benefit which *parents* might derive, and which, indeed, they *ought* to derive, from the dedication of their children to the Triune God in a solemn religious ordinance. We have now to do with the question, "What good can the *infant* himself get from baptism?" When our Lord was upon earth, "they brought young children to Him;" "*infants*" St. Luke calls them: and though the disciples "*rebuked* those that brought them," doubtless thinking that the children were too young to get any good; yet "He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and *blessed* them." Now what was the "blessing" which the Saviour gave to these "infants?" Was it a mere matter of form? just empty words? Who can believe that? But if not, it must have been a real, sub

stantial blessing : that is to say, Christ must have communicated to these infants some *spiritual* good. But if "infants" were capable of receiving spiritual good *then*, they must be capable of receiving it *now*. And surely we may justly expect that, in connexion with a solemn religious rite, and in answer to the prayers of a Christian congregation, the Lord Jesus will graciously communicate a blessing to our infant children. Of the precise extent of the blessing which we are warranted to expect, we *know* nothing, and therefore can *say* nothing. But that infants are *capable* of spiritual good we have seen ; and surely we are authorized to expect its bestowment in connexion with their solemn dedication to God in the rite of holy baptism.

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### APPENDIX ON RE-BAPTIZING.

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It not unfrequently happens that conscientious persons, who were baptized in infancy, and who have not examined this controversy, are brought into a state of doubt and perplexity by the incessant talk of some over-zealous neighbor ; and in this state of mind are urged at once to be re-baptized by dipping, in order to put an end to their perplexity. But this advice is certainly most unsound. We would urge the man who is in doubt to read and think until he is thoroughly persuaded in his own mind ; and *when* he is thus persuaded, and *not before*, let him act according to his convictions of duty. If baptism in infancy and by sprinkling *be* valid baptism, and we think we have proved that *it is*, then it becomes a serious matter to repeat it. Our authority to

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baptize at all rests entirely on the command of the Great Teacher ; but we have no authority from Him to repeat the rite. Nay, the very nature and design of the ordinance show that it *cannot* be legitimately repeated. It is, as we have seen, the initiatory rite of the Christian covenant, the door of entrance into the Christian church ; and therefore, to ask a man who has already been baptized to be dipped, involves the absurdity of asking him to walk into a room in which he is already comfortably seated. But the absurdity is not *all*, nor even the *worst* part of the case. To re-baptize is to act *without* the authority of the Master. Nay, more, it is to act *against* His authority ; for, plainly, He never meant that the rite should be repeated. If a man, *after having given his very best attention to the matter*, firmly believes that it is essential to the validity of baptism that its subjects should be adult believers, and that it should be administered by dipping,—and *therefore* is re-baptized ; although the act is, in our judgment, wrong, we find an apology for his conduct in his mistaken views of the rite. But no such apology can be made for the man who simply *doubts*, and whose views on the question are unsettled. To advise him, in this state of mind, to be re-baptized, is to advise him to an act of the lawfulness of which he is not yet convinced. We are not averse to inquiry ; on the contrary, we strongly urge it, and say the more thorough it is, the better : but we do protest, most earnestly, against the practice, which is but too common, of getting conscientious persons who are in doubt and perplexity, to submit to be re-baptized in order to put an end to their perplexity. Nothing can be more irrational ; the *doubter* is to *inquire*, and resolutely to refuse to *act* until he is *quite convinced*.

Can it be right, then,—is it quite fair and honourable,—

for ministers to advertize that "they are always glad to baptize believers *of any denomination?*" Let it be supposed that the only point of difference was in regard to the *mode*; and that we held the opinion that sprinkling and pouring were the *only* legitimate modes of applying the water; and that, on this ground, we were to announce our readiness to re-baptize the members of the Baptist churches; would they not be loud in their complaints against such conduct? Would they not protest against it, as an attempt to unsettle the minds of their church-members; and say that it looked very much like a design to entrap them? And they would be warranted in so saying. We know that the parties concerned will say that their object in offering to baptize the members of other churches is not to induce them to forsake their own folds and enter theirs; but merely to accommodate those conscientious persons who are dissatisfied with their baptism, and desire to be dipped. This is kind and considerate, no doubt. But let us look at facts. How many of the members of other churches, who are dipped by other ministers, retain their connexion with these churches? Do they not, almost to a man, join the church of the minister who dips them? And do not the men who issue these advertisements very well know this?

Then let the conscientious members of other churches be on their guard. "Surely in vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird." If they are *in doubt*, let them *inquire*: but let them not dare to *act* until they are satisfied *beyond a doubt*, lest they should offend the Lord Jesus by repeating an ordinance, which it is clear, from its very nature, as well as from His own words, we are only authorized to receive *once*.

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