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BAPTISM AND SALVATION.



BY

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UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

THE RELATIONSHIP

OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH

SALVATION

THE RELATIONSHIP OF SALVATION

THE MODERN BAPTIST

BY ROY

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

PAGE

SALVATION - - - - - 5

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATION OF BAPTISM TO

SALVATION - - - - - 18

CHAPTER III.

THE MODE AND SUBJECTS OF

BAPTISM - - - - - 28

P R E F A C E .

The Chapters on Baptism which form the matter of this little work are the substance of three discourses preached on the evenings of August 15th, 22nd and 29th, 1880. Though asked to publish them some time afterward, I did not think them likely to be of any service to the public. Having recently been asked again to furnish them for publication, I have put them into their present shape, in the hope that they may contribute to unity of spirit, in a clearer comprehension of a subject on which almost everything has been said that can be said.

JAMES ROY.

1464 St. Catherine Street,
Montreal, March 22nd, 1882.

BAPTISM

"Go ye, therefore, into all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you, and will go with you, unto the end of the world. Amen."

"..... water now save you, except the filth of the flesh, and of a good conscience."

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BAPTISM AND SALVATION.

CHAPTER I.

SALVATION.

"Go ye, therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Matth. xxviii. 19.

"..... water, which also after a true likeness doth now save you, *even* baptism, not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the interrogation (Margin: appeal) of a good conscience toward God."

1 Peter iii. 21.

BAPTISM was once the badge of an undivided Christianity. To have been baptized into the threefold name was to have a passport into a universal communion. Now, it has become a ground of contention and a symbol of disunion. One community emphasizes the qualifications of him who performs the rite, and others in-

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sist on peculiarities in the mode of administering it, to such a degree that dissidents from their opinions are repelled, and disunion is perpetuated. From being a badge of universal brotherhood, and a pledge of universal acceptability, it has come to be a source of sectarian separation.

Can it again become the one outward mark of an undivided recognition? Surely it can; and he who contributes but a small share to so desirable a result contributes to the progress of the one Faith of our one and common Lord.

To the settlement of all the questions relating to baptism, one other question is preliminary. If we answer "No" to the question, "Can a man be saved without it?" the reply will be, "What, then, is valid baptism, and how should it be performed?" If we answer "Yes," the question still will come, "What, then, are the meaning and value of baptism?" The solution of the problems of the meaning, the form and the subjects of baptism, then hinges on the preliminary question:

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What is salvation?

When we say that a man can or cannot be saved without baptism, what do we mean by being saved?

1. The answer of the Bible to the question is given in figures of speech. The answer that is adapted to the wants of western thought must be given in the form of a strictly scientific definition. The Bible says salvation is a birth from above, a washing or cleansing of us in the blood of Jesus Christ, the ransom of our spirit from bondage, a new creation, a crucifixion, a death, a resurrection, a union with God. One fact only is designated by these various figures; but each figure brings out a new phase of that one fact, as it is viewed from the stand-point of each person's experience. A coin appears to one man as a circle, to another as a line, to another as an oval, as it is seen from different positions; yet the coin is one thing, and can be defined scientifically, apart from the stand-point of any observer. In the New Testament,

salvation is spoken of from the stand-point of men once consciously wicked. He who was conscious of slavery to habits of evil called salvation a ransoming of his spirit. He who learned to loathe the uncleanness more than the bondage, called it a cleansing. He who had tired of its long continuance called it a new birth or creation. He to whom its commencement was a rending of attachments sweet as life called it a crucifixion. He who found the loneliness of an unloved life swallowed up in the bliss of divine fellowship called it union with God. To literalize all these figures would be to introduce confusion and not clearness into our thought. What is the one fact, defined in terms of western language, apart from all the phases which that fact assumes through the emotions of him who is saved?

2. Salvation is the satisfaction and well-being that arise from godliness in constitution and character.

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do not wander to the ties or the embankment, progress is satisfactory, and well-being is secure. There is a moral and spiritual track to which human nature is adapted—a course marked out for us by the Author of our being. To be found on that track is salvation. Into that salvation satisfaction enters. We have peace, sometimes we have joy that is ecstatic. Our higher nature has found its fitting groove, and we rejoice to find the complicated machine running so smoothly. But the element of well-being also enters into it. Not all that gratifies has well-being. Every appetite satisfied gives gratification; but the gratification may be disastrous. In salvation, well-being exists even where satisfaction is, for the time, unknown. The clouds sometimes hide the sun; but the growth of plants goes on. The saved ones do not always revel in the sun-light, but they grow, notwithstanding.

Salvation is dependent upon personal character. How many persons consider it

to be connected with certain rites or certain opinions! They have usually found it so, and they suppose it must ever be so. It may or it may not be. It is often in the Quaker, who has abjured external rites. It is often in persons of the most diverse beliefs. It lived in Keble and in Sarah Flower Adams, in Dean Stanley and in Michael Faraday. But, apart from personal character, there is no salvation. No rites that leave the heart untouched, no opinions, however correct, that leave the moral and spiritual nature unmoved and unelevated make men the elect of God. In Christ's sermon on the Mount, blessedness and character are everywhere connected—blessedness and rites or opinions, nowhere. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the peace-makers." But never does the Master say: "Blessed are those baptized by lay or clerical hands. Blessed are the disciples of Hillel. Blessed are the disciples of Shammai. Blessed are the Arians. Blessed are the Athanasians." This must not be construed as indiffer-

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Salvation is also dependent upon our constitution. It is partly the well-being that results from godlikeness. That well-being includes the approval or favor of God. This and salvation are co-incident. When does God's approval of men begin? When godlikeness or christlikeness begins, doubtless. Is there any such godlikeness in humanity, as such, by its very constitution? The infant's character is undeveloped. It lies wrapped up in the babe's constitution. Yet we never doubt that God's favor rests upon the youngest infant; and, when our babies die, we comfort ourselves with the belief that they are saved. Yet neither satisfaction nor well-being can be theirs unless godlikeness is in their character or constitution. "Christ in us" is our only "hope of glory." That there is in the human constitution, often merely latent, and not seldom terribly defaced, sometimes almost obliterated, a trace of the divine likeness, a germ of the inner Christ,

has been held by the wisest thinkers. They have called humanity "a temple in ruins." They can still see the temple outlines, and know that it is a temple, a thing of beauty which can be restored, and one that deserves and gains attachment even from its possibilities.

Speaking of one feature of this Christ-spirit, Bishop Butler says:

"It is sufficient that the seeds of it be implanted in our nature by God. There is, it is owned, much left for us to do upon our own heart and temper; to cultivate, to improve, to call it forth, to exercise it in a steady uniform manner. This is our work: this is virtue and religion." *

What Butler asserts, our experience confirms. In the very humanity of our worst children, daily association reveals the germs of a Christian character. In the lowest races, the godlike image is not wholly gone.

* Sermons on Human Nature. Serm. I, 3. Note f.

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What experience proclaims, the Scriptures repeatedly assert. "Of such is the kingdom of heaven," was said of little children, in whose very constitution must have lain the heavenly source of attraction to the loving Savior. Some sparks of the eternal Light that tented in the human flesh of Jesus light "every man coming into the world." We are to "call no man common or unclean." "Whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord." God "is the Savior of all men, specially of them that believe." "The Gentiles do by nature the things of the law." The "Son of Man" is "the Son of God." There is a certain christlikeness in our very humanity. The loss of the soul is the obliteration of it. The retention of God's favor is gained by letting it grow and dominate us. Where the divine image rests, be it in the developing strength of manhood or in the latent tendencies of the infant's nature, God's favor rests; and with it is salvation, the well-being or satisfaction given by godlikeness.

3. Note f.

3. This salvation, in any of us, exists only in degree. There is a time when a man may say, "I am saved"; but "saved" is only a relative term.

A minister once crossed in winter a very dangerous river. The ice rose and fell under his horse's feet like the calm swell of the sea. At one place, some yards from the shore, the current and an eddy met, and prevented the ice from forming, at any time, a strong crossing. Then, it was specially treacherous. As he approached it he gave his horse a sudden cut with the whip. The horse made a leap for the shore and gained it. For a few minutes the ice remained; then it broke and rushed down to the rapids not far below, leaving the black, cold, swift stream to tell its tale of danger. But the man was saved. Saved, indeed; yet many a mile of forest lay between him and his home, and many a lair of wild beast, and many a wandering track, where no regular road prevented the traveller from losing his way. To be saved was, in his case, only relative. He

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was no longer detained in the distant settlement, no longer in danger of being shut up there till spring opened; but complete deliverance was not yet his.

In religion, men's salvation is never more than relative. It is only proportionate to the christlikeness that is in them. As there are no "temples in ruins" without some attractions that make it desirable to preserve or restore them, so there are few restored temples whose restoration is not open to censoring criticism. In the oldest Christian there are evils that lessen his blessedness. In the unconscious babe, the christlikeness may be only in germ and latent possibility. But in infant and aged alike the well-being, the salvation, is but in varied degrees. What often seems but the beginning of spiritual life, and is often called "conversion," is but one of many crisis-moments in the development of a grace that lay slumbering in the nature, and waiting for the sun and showers to rouse it into life and growth.

1. Remember, then, what salvation is. It is not incorporation into an organization, human or divine, though that may symbolize it. The term "regeneration" may be applied to the process of admitting a babe to the rights of church-membership; but it can be so applied only as a symbol of that impartation of moral qualities which is the real regeneration.

Salvation is no magical process, no *hocus pocus*, by which in virtue of some outward performances, inward changes are necessarily produced. It is no transfer of credit due to another for moral qualities not possessed by you. It is no complacency of self-satisfaction. It is the blessedness of being Christ-like, not of thinking or knowing that we are Christ-like. It is the luxury of kinship with another; and where the sense of luxury is dulled, it is the safety that comes from that kinship.

2. Remember what the loss of the soul is. It is no mysterious curse, describable or indescribable, capable of being wrought

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by the carelessness, the neglect, or the hateful design of others. It is the baseness, the degradation, realized or not realized, felt or not felt, of want of christlikeness, the state in which he already is who does not believe in Jesus, who neither thinks, feels, nor sympathizes as Jesus did.

3. Remember God's love revealed and communicated to us in Christ. "I find no christlikeness in me," says some one, "how can I be saved?" Abandon and repudiate the evil. Trust for acceptance in the love which the coming of such a one as Christ has manifested, though you see nothing in yourself worthy to be accepted; and the very self-abandonment of your trust will be christlikeness, and will be "counted for righteousness." The love that gave Christ to the world can be trusted to accept, out of its own good-will, him who turns to the Savior it has given.

CHAPTER II.

THE RELATION OF BAPTISM TO SALVATION.

The substance of the previous chapter is that salvation is the satisfaction and well-being that arise from christlikeness in constitution and character, that a germ of this is in human nature, by the grace of the Creator, that, as this is obliterated, the soul is lost, and that, as this is developed or restored, the soul is saved.

The present chapter must treat of the relation of baptism to this salvation.

1. Baptism is not the means of producing it.

(a) This may appear from the very nature of salvation. Of course, any ordinance used as a help by one who seeks that help in a proper spirit, will become a channel of blessing; and submission to baptism in that spirit, has often confirmed the faith of

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souls giving themselves to Christ. But this does not arise by virtue of the baptism. That rite, performed upon a child, leaves the child, spiritually, just as he was before. Of itself, it is no channel of grace, it imparts no favor, it develops no graces of character, no godlikeness. No one is necessarily more blessed for submitting to it than he was before. Heavenly virtues grow in us by emotions aroused, by thoughts and principles adopted as the moral forces that mould our life, not by the mere use of matter or forms.

(b) The same appears from the comparative indifference to it in New Testament times. The indifference was not absolute. Baptism was regarded as of no slight value. But Christ did not baptize with water. There is no evidence that his Apostles were ever, themselves, baptized. Paul did not very frequently practice it. "Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel," said he to the Corinthians. This would not have been the case had he regarded the rite as the channel of God's favor, or

the means through which God's Spirit produces graces of character in us.

(c) The world's experience confirms this view. Sects often become the embodiments of great principles, and thus do their work of teaching the world's teachers. The proverbial goodness of the Quakers is connected in no way with water baptism. The cruelty of those who burned the Protestant martyrs was due in no way to their not having been baptized. It was not from lack of baptism that Penn attacked the surpliced students of Christ Church College, in Peckwater quadrangle. It was not by virtue of his baptism that he refused to accept the royal grant of Pennsylvania, on that grant alone, but paid the Indians for it besides.

Let not parents, then, fear for the safety of children dying unbaptized. By the grace of the Creator there lies in humanity some measure of His image. So far as that is in the child, so far will he have the satisfaction and the well-being which are salvation. A measure of this

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This may furnish grounds for at once avoiding superstitious fears of danger to our babies, when they die unbaptized, and for making all due effort to preserve their lives in illness.

The unbaptized infant is not endangered by the neglect of parent or guardian, nor by the pressure of circumstances beyond parental control. It is not best for the infant to die before coming to years of responsibility. Its humanity secures God's love and protection; and the possible increase of satisfaction and well-being arising from the culture of Christian graces makes life more desirable than death.

Why, then, is baptism necessary?

2. Baptism is needed as a means of instruction.

(a) The relation of the participle, "baptizing," to the principal verb, "make disciples," shows this to be the author's sense of the passage. In Farrar's "Greek Syntax,"

the second rule on the participle, under which an example parallel to Matth. xxviii. 19 is given, states that "the participle expresses the *accidents* of the verbal notion; time, cause, manner." One of the modes of teaching, then, was to be by baptizing.

Winer, in his "Grammar of the New Testament Diction," p. 205, confirms this by saying that Christian baptism differs from Jewish legal baptisms, or lustrations, by the element of instruction involved in the former, thus making that Christian rite a means of teaching.

(b) It teaches as a symbol. To communicate any thought, it must be symbolized, represented in some outward way. Symbols may be sounds heard, marks seen, or acts done. When a Protestant minister preaches, his words are symbols of thoughts. The importance lies not in the words used, but in the thoughts conveyed. So long as the thoughts are correct, the words used to convey them may be changed from short and pithy Saxon to long and ponderous words of Latin derivation. The form

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When a minister preaches, his words are symbols of thoughts. Those who understand the language of symbols as articulated there is in the language of symbols incorrect. So long as the words convey truth in some form of symbol

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of the symbol, so long as it accurately conveys the thoughts, may be changed to suit changed circumstances.

When a ritualist conducts religious services, his robes and posturings become, to those who are initiated, a conventional language that expresses thoughts as truly as articulate speech can do it. If harm there is in his ritualism, it lies not in his language of forms and robes, but in the incorrectness of the thoughts conveyed. So long as that conventional language conveys truth, it is as legitimate as any other form of speech to those who understand it.

The painting on the wall, the letters printed or written or carved, the flag of a nation or of a regiment, the crown of a sovereign, are but symbols of thoughts, and are valuable only as they express thoughts that are true and ennobling; and their forms may be changed, so long as the truth symbolized is correctly conveyed by them. The Lord's Supper, too, is a symbol of thoughts it helps to perpetuate. So is baptism a sign or symbol of thoughts, the

communication of which is part of the Church's work of teaching.

(c) Baptism symbolizes all Christ's teaching on the question of man's salvation.

How does Christ represent that man is saved? Let me illustrate it. How is a balloon carried in any given direction? There are currents in the upper air, where a power, a wind, a breath of the Creator, influences the balloon. Some thing, or some one, must reveal to you the existence and the place of the current. You must so far trust his revelation as to commit yourself to what he says. So committing yourself, you find whether he is true or not, and are carried in your balloon in the required direction.

The air, in salvation, is the Father's love.

The current of heavenly breath is God's Spirit.

The revealer of its existence and place is Christ.

So trust Him as to rise in the Father's love into the current of His Spirit's action.

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Let me illustrate it. How is a balloon carried in any given direction? There are currents in the upper air, where a power, a wind, a breath of the Creator, influences the balloon. Some thing, or some one, must reveal to you the existence and the place of the current. You must so far trust his revelation as to commit yourself to what he says. So committing yourself, you find whether he is true or not, and are carried in your balloon in the required direction.

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Let me illustrate this again. There are subterranean streams, of which, if you drink, you are refreshed, and into which, if you plunge, you are cleansed. To obtain the benefits of these, you need some one to open them up for you. Then, by using them, you find a virtue in them to refresh and purify you. God's love is the hidden stream. Christ opens it up for you. The refreshing and cleansing virtue is that divine Spirit which, moving on all nature, in all intelligence, through all human feelings, preserves, perpetuates and blesses life.

There is a power from without us that entering within gives godlikeness and the bliss of godlikeness. There is a source whence that power proceeds. There is a revealer of that source of power and blessing. The power from without is the Holy Spirit. The source of power is in the love of the Father, God. The revealer of that Father and His love is Christ the Son.

Baptism, in the material used, in the form of its application from without, and in the words of the three-fold name employed, symbolizes the character, the source and the method of the salvation of a soul.

3. Baptism is a means of professing faith.

In 1 Peter iii. 21, we have a discrimination between an act and the reasons for the act. The act is baptism, washing, [?] "the putting away of the filth of the flesh." The reason for the act is, according to the old version, "the answer," and, according to the new, "the interrogation, or appeal, of a good conscience toward God." The virtue of baptism is represented as lying, not in the mere act, but in the reason or motive why the act is done.

In all great transactions, we ratify our acts by some performance of a solemn and binding nature. When the Jews made a covenant, they passed between the pieces of a dead animal or dead animals, sacrificed for the occasion, as if to say, "If I

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break this covenant, may I be broken as these pieces are." Jer. xxxiv. 18. When the first one passed between the pieces, his act was an appeal to the second to complete the compact, fidelity to which the first one thereby professed.

So, when, amongst ourselves, one man signs a deed, or the representatives of one nation sign a treaty, that act is the appeal of a good intention to the other party for a fulfilment of the pledge.

Baptism, also, is on our part, a convenient way of professing our adherence to a covenant with God, and an appeal to the Creator to ratify the covenant, adhesion to which we profess. Baptism, then, is a convenient and significant rite, answering two purposes, the instruction of the observers, and a pledge of fidelity which appeals to the goodness and fidelity of God—a sign, to teach, and a seal, to confirm.

It, then, is not the medium of salvation, "of communicating moral changes. It is not even necessary to salvation. It is part of

the Church's symbolical and recognitional methods of teaching. It is part of the individual's method of pledging himself to his Maker's service. So long as human nature remains what it is, and needs the compact symbolizing of thoughts, so long must baptism be an important factor, not merely in the world's education, but in the language of good consciences, making their individual appeal to the goodness of Him into whose name and spirit they are baptized.

CHAPTER III.

THE MODE AND SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM.

How should we baptize? Whom should we baptize? The answers to these questions depend upon the meaning of baptism. In the previous chapter, the conclusion was reached that the rite was intended originally for a symbolic means of instruction, and an appropriate form for professing faith. This may aid us in deciding,

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First, the mode in which baptism should be performed.

It symbolizes the operation of divine power on men which we call, not by a literal description, but in figurative speech, washing. All life and progress are ultimately traced, not to tendencies in things themselves, but to a divine power which we call "spirit." This power, operating in, upon and through our moral nature, is said to wash, or cleanse us. Baptism is the outward symbol of that divine operation.

Rom 6:3-5

What mode may best symbolize that cleansing? This principle, which guides us in other things, must surely be allowed to guide us here: so long as the thought, purpose, instruction, profession, is properly conveyed, the form of the symbol may be changed, to suit the demands of changed circumstances.

So long as the true sounds of the German language are conveyed, is it not at the option of the Teutons whether they shall use their own old letters or those of the Roman alphabet? The latter may be

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less injurious to the eye than the former ; and, if so, is a changed method of printing any injury to the sound or sense of the German language ? Is its power to convey information and to cultivate the mind in any way lessened by changing the form of the symbols of its sounds ?

Mr. Herbert Spencer has defined evolution as "a change from an indefinite incoherent homogeneity to a definite coherent heterogeneity, through continuous differentiations and integrations." To a scholar, skilled in tracing the connections of thought through etymology, this definition is quite clear. The meaning is not at all obscured by the ponderous verbiage that symbolizes it. But, for the benefit of ordinary people, would not Mr. Spencer do wisely if he were to change the symbolic forms of his thought to simpler Anglo-Saxon ?

That great body of Christian people which we call the Church has ever acted on this principle, that, so long as truth is preserved, the forms of expressing truth may be changed, if convenience demands

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a change. The mode of partaking of the Lord's Supper has been changed : has the accomplishment of its commemorative purpose been hindered thereby ?

The mode of observing one day of rest out of the seven that make our week has been changed : has the benefit of that day of rest been lessened by the change ?

Candidates for baptism are no longer required to undergo the process in a state of nudity, as was the case in early times. At first, the converting minister, the human agent in the conversion, baptized his own converts. Afterwards, the Bishop did so. Now, we have returned to the primitive custom. Have the successive changes invalidated, at any time, the rite ?

Judging from these analogies, the Church has a right to change the mode of baptism, if circumstances make one mode preferable to the other.

1. History sanctions the choice of forms.

Mosheim asserts that, in the first and second centuries, baptism " was performed

by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font," "under water."* Conybeare and Howson assert that immersion was the common custom in the early church, but that, in exceptional cases, other modes were adopted, thus showing that, even then, the Church assumed the right to change the form if circumstances rendered a change more convenient.† Kurtz says that in the first period of the Church's history, from A.D. 100 to 323, "baptism was performed by thrice *immersing*; . . . *sprinkling* was only common in case of the sick."‡ This diversity of practice, according to the judgment of the Church on the demands of circumstances, continued through the second period, from A.D. 323 to 692. §

Wesley, in his Note on "buried with him in baptism," says the primitive practice was by immersion. Dean Stanley

* History. Chapter IV. viii, 1st century. Chap. IV. xiii, 2nd century.

† Life and Epistles of St. Paul, i. p. 439; ii. p. 169, note 1.

‡ Church History, i. p. 119.

§ Church History, i. p. 227. 1.

asserts that the almost by immersion is the verism."* on the autmilian, tha thought, while imm "perfusior unlawful.' tian in A.] fusion or Ezekiel x and Num Book of tl the first p admits th the mode in the he If an c permitted

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asserts that, for "the first thirteen centuries the almost universal practice" was baptism by immersion; and he says that immersion is the very meaning of the word "baptism."* The Lord Chancellor King says, on the authority of Justin Martyr and Firmilian, that baptism had, for its foundation thought, washing; and he shows that, while immersion was the common mode, "perfusion or sprinkling was not accounted unlawful." Cyprian, who became a Christian in A.D. 246, defended baptism by perfusion or aspersion, quoting in its behalf Ezekiel xxxvi. 25, 26; Numbers xix. 19, 20; and Numbers viii. 6, 7.† The Prayer Book of the English Church, while giving the first place of importance to immersion, admits the right of the Church to change the mode, where a sufficient cause is found in the health of the candidate.

If an option is permitted, and has been permitted from the beginning, on the

* Christian Institutions, p. 17.

† King's Account of the Primitive Church, pp. 218-222.

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ground of health, there is no reason why other grounds of expediency should be regarded as insufficient to render valid the form which, in cases of sickness, has ever been allowed.

The Catacombs of Rome have pictures of baptismal scenes, from the second to the eighth century, representing the use of sprinkling and pouring; and they have furnished fonts, hewn from the solid tufa, which, from their size, seem to forbid the idea of immersion.

In special cases, then, from the very beginning, pouring and sprinkling, as well as immersion, were practiced; and in the Western Church, even prior to the schism of the Greek Church, completed in 1053 A.D., the former modes were common.

2. Criticism sanctions both forms.

Mere literary criticism of the word "baptize" does so. Liddell and Scott give, as the original meaning of *baptizo*, "dip"; but they do not hide the fact that the meaning "pour," also, belonged to the word.

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Biblical criticism sanctions both forms.

In Mark vii. 2-5, the general notion is that of washing, while the various modes of doing so are brought out in the Greek verbs used. These verbs are evidently used as synonymous; yet we have, in that short passage, taking marginal readings, as well as the text, *nipto*, to wash, *rhantizo*, to sprinkle, and *baptizo*, to baptize. Even assuming, then, that *baptizo* means "to immerse," we have one act so described as to admit of its being performed in different modes. The essential idea is washing. The accidental notion is the form in which the washing is done.

The washing of hands, represented in the majority of MSS. in Mark vii. 4, as "baptizing," we know from 2 Kings iii. 11, and from the modern unchanging hereditary customs of the East, to have been by pouring.

The Holy Spirit, whose action is symbolized by water baptism, is "poured out."

3. The convenience of a universal reli-

gion sanctions both forms. To be universal, convenience of locality, health, and other circumstances must be considered. A luxury in the south, or at ordinary times, might be dangerous or impossible in the north, or under special conditions of health anywhere; and in the desert it might be extravagant.

A universal religion must be suited to every exigency, and cannot be tied to rigidity of form.

4. The spirit of Christ sanctions both forms.

"In Christ there is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision, but a new creature." Christianity is not "meats and drinks," modes of formal observances. Truth, principles, moral and spiritual life, these are Christ and Christianity, not the mere forms poor, weak humanity needs as symbols of these. He that immerseth, immerseth unto the Lord; and he that poureth, poureth unto the Lord, for he giveth God thanks. Let not him that immerseth set at nought

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him that immerseth not; and let not him that immerseth not judge him that immerseth; for God hath received him. "Let each man be fully assured in his own mind."

Secondly, whom may we baptize?

The reply to this, also, depends upon the meaning of baptism. If baptism were the necessary channel of spiritual life, then, by any and by all means, let every one be baptized. If it were only a sign of profession, then only those capable of making a profession should undergo the rite. If teaching is, also, involved in the act, the subjects of baptism may be learned from the lessons to be taught.

What does baptism, as a symbol, teach?

Here, too, it must be remembered that primitive practice, which arose from circumstances, may change with the circumstances, so long as the thought symbolized is never abandoned. The circumstances of the early Church made it necessarily aggressive. Now, its work is chiefly con-

servative. Then, its labor was directed entirely to the conversion of non-Christians. Now, its aim is chiefly to prevent the lapse into error and vice of those who by birth and education are Christians, at least in name.

It is not surprising that, at first, baptism should be wholly confined to adults; for the breadth of Christian principles has been only gradually realized, and the relation of Christian households, and of humanity, to the grace of God did not, at first, dawn upon the minds of the men who, during the Savior's life, so slowly grasped his wider thoughts. It is not surprising that, as Christian families grew, the baptism of infants should gradually arise: for it would not seem other than absurd to put the children of Christian parents on the same footing as heathen rejectors of the truth. Long before any definite study had been given to the relation of humanity, as such, to God and to eternal life, the heart of the Christian mother would instinctively leap to the conviction that her child was

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not a little heathen; and, if not a heathen, what then could he be but a Christian in embryo? This would especially be the case wherever Christians received such teaching as that found in 1 Cor. vii. 14: "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified in the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the brother: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy." It was not an unnatural or an improper thing that people should grow into the conviction that, if baptism were appropriate for him whose relation to God arose from a late repentance, it was also appropriate to him whose relation to God arose from his birth from parents, the Christianity of only one of whom was sufficient to sanctify him. Nor was it more unnatural or improper subsequently to carry the principle further, and argue that, if the educating influences of a single parent, whose conversion to Christianity was posterior to the birth of the child, and could, consequently, in no way affect the constitution of the child, were sufficient to make

a distinction between the relation to God of a Christian parent's offspring and an unconverted heathen, then, much more must the relation of all infants to God, and their eternal destinies thence arising, depend upon something less fluctuating than the possible changes of a parent's sentiments and convictions. Whatever theories might, in time, be adopted to explain the relation of all infants to God and eternal life, it was impossible that the conviction would not come, sooner or later, that infants occupied a relation of acceptability to God which entitled them to the symbolic rite by which the Church had from the beginning recognized that relationship wherever it was believed to exist. It is not surprising, then, that the parent's faith, that the Church's faith, in the existence of a relationship of acceptability and affection between God and a Christian's child should be declared by baptism, even when the child was unconscious of the act and its significance; for baptism is not merely a

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Hence, we can easily account for the fact that, in the Catacombs, inscriptions are found classing infants, even in very early times, as neophytes, a term which signified baptized persons.

The change in the Church's practice, from adult baptism as the rule to adult baptism as the exception, was not only justifiable, but necessary, from the right of humanity to alter the forms of its symbols, so long as their significance is retained, and from the widening insight of the Church into those relations of humanity to God so significantly taught in the double title of our Lord—the Son of Man and the Son of God.

1. As a sign of profession of faith on the part of a converted individual, baptism is still adapted to adults. Aggressive work remains to be done. There are Jews yet, dear souls, many of them, for whose sake we must remove from our presentations

of Christianity the stumbling-blocks of heathen accretion gathered through centuries of literalizing the metaphors of Palestine, and basing speculations on the prosaic metamorphoses.

When the poetic beauty and spiritual truth of the Christian gospels shall have commended them to the Jew, and when Christ shall have been seen really to have embodied in himself the truest and highest conceptions of their national Messiah, then shall the Jew await the Christian symbolic recognition of his faith.

There are Heathen yet, and Mahomedans. There are puzzled sceptics yet, who, when Christian truth, freed from a traditional dress which makes it seem less than truth, has been seen by eyes less blinded by unspiritual sympathies, shall acknowledge Christ; and then, baptism shall proclaim the Church's welcome to those who, agnostic no longer, shall say: "We know that we are of God, because we love the brethren."

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2. As a means of teaching, the very instruction conveyed by baptism, the Church's act of declaring her faith, would be defective if children were denied the rite.

Baptism symbolizes the operation of the Divine Spirit: on whom? Only those who consciously believe and obey? Do sun and moisture reach only the developed blade? Touch they not the hidden germ? Is there no hidden germ of christlikeness in the constitution of the child, by virtue of its very humanness? Does the Sun of Righteousness not love the germ, and play it into strength and fruitfulness? Is there no Light that lightens every human being coming into the world? Is there no divine, prevenient purifying which, if not resisted, will go on from infancy to age? Is there no consequent well-being in the child, no elements of a growing salvation? If there is, why should the Church refuse her acknowledgement of the fact? Why not profess her faith in what she regards as true, and so teach the world what Chris-

tianity believes about infant humanity and God?

The regenerating influences of God's Spirit do not begin only on the occasion of conscious surrender. There is prevenient grace; and baptism declares our faith in the presence of it in our child even before the little one's own intelligence can recognize it. Habitually to neglect the baptism of infants would be to omit a vital portion of the Church's teaching, and tend to the elevation of sensational revivalism, which is often needed as a stimulus, over the quiet and steady influence of home and church, which is always best for the development of the latent germs of Christian grace and virtue that lie in every human soul.

What is here set forth has been written, not for controversy, but for unity; not to attack and to destroy, but to confirm and to conserve. In physical life, food is necessary; but the matter that composes it, and the way in which it is prepared, are legitimate subjects of change, if circumstances

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demand it. The food of the Christian life is truth, not the forms in which truth is conveyed and by which it is expressed. What a graceful writer has said of beauty is equally true of truth :

“Let us not imagine that the type of beauty is ever its reality. The reality is not material, but spiritual, and must be spiritually discerned. If we find our joy in type instead of the reality, we become materialists. To do this has been the temptation of seekers after beauty in all ages. Perhaps every artist has had moments in which he forgot the meaning of ideal beauty, and deified its sensible expressions.”

In this passage, substitute for “artist,” the word “thinker,” and for “beauty,” the word “truth,” and how profound is the lesson it teaches!

Let us preserve symbols; for they are needed by human nature as expressions of the ideal in truth as in beauty. But, as our conceptions of ideal perfection in truth are ever expanding, let us not bring upon

ourselves a curse instead of a blessing, by assuming that Chinese social custom rules the government of Heaven. In the true Celestial Kingdom, the boot must expand with the expanding foot. Christianity becomes lame when the growing foot is cramped into the rigid unchanging form of its incasement.

The Church has changed her forms of practice in baptizing: she had a perfect right to do so.

If any Christians prefer the earlier to the later forms, or the later to the earlier, who shall condemn them? If any see not the wisdom of baptizing children, who shall force them to observe the practice before they see it to be right? Cannot mutual forbearance find a ground of closer unity between organizations not uncongenial to each other, that they may not be crippled in their efficiency by divisions based upon things of merely minor importance?