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## BAPTISM ACCORDING TO SCRIPTURE.

BY E. H. HOARE, A.M.  
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JESUS "SAID UNTO HIM, WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW READEST  
THOU?"—LUKE X. 26.

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### ADVERTISEMENT.

AT a Clerical Meeting in the country this Question was lately proposed for discussion;—"What may be deduced *from Holy Scripture* concerning Baptism, as a Sacrament of the Christian Church?"

In order to arrive at a satisfactory conclusion, it appeared to one of the members present to be necessary, that *every passage of Scripture bearing upon the subject* should be considered, and its true meaning sought; and that care should of course be taken, that no text be so expounded as to make it repugnant to another. This course was consequently pursued by him. Each passage was examined in succession; and though the inquiry extended much beyond his expectation, and was not carried through without pains, yet the interest of the research more than compensated for the labour of it.

The subject being of great importance, and more especially at the present time, it was thought that the cause of truth would be served by the publication of what had been written; and a request was made to that effect. In the hope, and with the earnest desire and prayer, that such may be the result, the writer has consented to its publication: and as the Church, to which it is his privilege to belong, has declared concerning Holy Scripture, "that whatsoever is not read

therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an Article of the faith," (Art. vi.)—he feels himself fully justified, as a Minister of the Church, in having endeavoured simply to ascertain the sense of Scripture, in the several texts which have come before him.

January, 1850.

## ON BAPTISM, &c. &c.

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It is thought by some, that baptism, or the washing of the person or clothes, as a religious ceremony, commenced immediately after the deluge. St. Peter certainly speaks of baptism in connection with that great event: (1 Ep. iii. 20, 21,)—"While the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water: the like figure whereunto, even baptism, doth also now save us." But, however this might be, we read of it at an early period. The first instance on record in Scripture of this washing as a preparation for God's service, is probably that which is found in Genesis xxxv. 2. God had said unto Jacob, "Arise, go up to Bethel, and dwell there, and make thee an altar unto God that appeared unto thee when thou fleddest from the face of Esau thy brother. Then Jacob said unto his household, and to all that were with him, Put away the strange gods that are among you, *and be clean, and change your garments*; and let us arise, and go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God, who answered me in the day of my distress." The direction—"Be clean," taken in connection with the change of their garments, did probably, among other things, mean the washing of themselves with water, as an emblem of the putting away of sin. Dr. Lightfoot understands by it Jacob's admission of the proselytes of Shechem and Syria into his religion by baptism; because circumcision was become odious to them. The cloud which God spread over the Israelites for a covering, (Ps. cv. 39,) when they came out of Egypt, and their safe passage through the waters of the Red Sea, appear to have had reference to the same subject; for the Apostle Paul, in 1 Cor. x. 1, 2, thus writes;—"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." Now if they were "baptized unto Moses," (which baptism represented and confirmed their obligation to follow Moses as their leader, and to obey the instructions and laws which he should give them,) much more were they baptized and bound unto God: or rather, they were baptized and bound unto Moses, as the minister of God and the medium of communication between God and the people.

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When the Israelites had entered the wilderness and had come to Mount Sinai, where God intended to give them His covenant, He "said unto Moses, Go unto the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their clothes, and be ready against the third day; for the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, upon Mount Sinai." (Ex. xix. 10.) And thus Maimonides, a great authority in the Jewish Law, says, that 'Israel was admitted into covenant with God in three ways:—by circumcision, by baptism, (alluding to this command, "Let them wash their clothes,") and by sacrifice.' When any of the heathen became proselytes to the Jewish religion, and sought admission into the Jewish church, it is said that the males were circumcised and baptized,—the females were baptized,—and the children generally baptized with the parents. And on the subject of the baptism of heathen children, Maimonides again says, that 'if an Israelite should find a Gentile infant, and baptize him in the name of a proselyte, behold, he is a proselyte.'

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By the precepts relating to ceremonial pollutions, the Jews were rendered incapable of appearing before God in the tabernacle or temple, till they were cleansed either by bathing or sprinkling. In the Nineteenth Chapter of the Book of Numbers the subject is particularly dwelt upon. When any one was ceremonially unclean, it was enjoined, (v. 19,) that a "clean person should sprinkle upon the unclean" (of the water of separation before spoken of) "on the third day, and on the seventh day; and on the seventh day he" (the unclean) was to "purify himself, and wash his clothes and bathe himself in water," and then he was to be "clean at even. But," as it is added in the next verse, "the man that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, *that soul shall be cut off from among the congregation*, because he hath defiled the Sanctuary of the Lord: the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean."

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When Moses received directions from the Lord concerning the consecration of Aaron and his sons, he was commanded (as we read in Ex. xxix. 4,) to "bring them unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and wash them with water;" and then to put the Priestly garments upon them. In short, by the law almost all things were purged by water, as well as by blood;—the one having as distinct and definite a signification as the other. And so familiar and forcible was this figure of water among the Jews, that many of the prophecies and promises relating to the Messiah and the spiritual blessings to be enjoyed in the times of the gospel were couched under it and conveyed by it. By Isaiah it is said of Him, "So shall He *sprinkle* many nations." (lii. 15.) And by the prophet Ezekiel the Lord saith,—"*Then will I sprinkle clean water* upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them."

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With this continued reference to water in connection with spiritual things, before their eyes, the Jews were doubtless prepared for its still farther use. Accordingly, when John appeared as the forerunner of the Messiah, and baptized with water all who were disposed to become his disciples, no surprise was expressed at his doing it. He was asked indeed by the Priests and Levites why he baptized, when they understood him as denying himself to be any one of those whom they expected to be sent by God. "If thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet, why baptizest thou?" (John i. 25.) But this only shews that they regarded baptism as a natural evidence of a divine mission. Of John's baptism we are told by himself, that it was a baptism unto repentance. "I indeed," said he, "baptize you with water unto repentance." (Matt. iii. 11.) And thus, all who were baptized of him "confessed their sins;"—confession being a necessary part of repentance. They also asked of him instruction as to their conduct in future: and to the different classes of his disciples he gave appropriate exhortations. In the account of John's baptism in Acts xix. 4., it is added, that he "said unto the people, that they should believe on Him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus." Thus baptism was administered by John *substantially* upon the same principle which afterwards governed the Christian Church; namely, upon a profession (taken to be sincere) of repentance and the faith of the gospel. For though the baptism of John was connected with a preparatory dispensation, it was of an evangelical and very practical character. He exposed the folly of trusting to outward advantages;—taught men their need of a Saviour;—and declared that nothing would satisfy God, and be accepted of Him, but the bringing forth of good fruit. "Every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." (Matt. iii. 10.)

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When speaking of himself and of his baptism, John was naturally led to speak of Him, to whom he came to bear witness: and he said that He also would baptize, and in a manner to which he (John) could make no pretension. "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." (Matt. iii. 11.) Various expositions have been given of these latter expressions. That they refer (among other meanings) to the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, which was accompanied with "cloven tongues like as of fire," sitting upon each of the Apostles, and by which they were enabled to speak in languages they had never learned,—and to the gift of divers kinds of tongues on other occasions, as in the case of Cornelius and his company,—is evident from what is said upon the subject in Acts i. 5. and xi. 15, 16. "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." "And as I (Peter) began to speak, the Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning. Then remembered I the word of the Lord, how that He said, John indeed baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost." But the expressions, "with the Holy Ghost and fire," have probably a still more extensive signification. No element is more subtle and powerful than fire: changing whatever it comes in contact with into its own nature. Thus fire (like water and wind, both of which are also made emblems of the Holy Spirit,) will represent the efficacy of Divine grace; its enlightening, purifying, refining and inflaming power; and so it forms a striking and happy contrast to that destroying fire, spoken of in the former and the following verses. And hereby would be fulfilled the prophecies of Isaiah and Malachi:—"When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the Spirit of judgment *and by the Spirit of burning.*" (Is. iv. 4.) "And the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple: He is *like a refiner's fire*, and like fuller's soap. And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." (Mal. iii. 1-3.) Or, the baptism of fire, if taken in connection with the context, would signify the desolating judgments of God upon the hardened Jews: or it might represent the afflictions which Christ's true followers were to suffer. To these He referred, when He said to the two sons of Zebedee, "With the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized." (Mark x. 39.)

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To the baptism of John, Jesus Himself submitted. The reason He gave to John for this was, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness:" (Matt. iii. 15.) hereby inculcating the duty of attention to whatever God hath commanded; and intimating His solemn entrance upon His Priestly Office, according to the directions which God gave to Moses concerning the washing of Aaron and his sons with water, as already referred to. (Ex. xxix. 4.) Occasion was also hereby afforded for the fulfilment of the sign given to John for the discovery of the Messiah: "Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining upon Him, the same is He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost." And John "saw, and bare record that this was the Son of God." (John i. 33, 34.)

After His own baptism by John, and His choice of the twelve Apostles, Jesus also baptized those who became His disciples. But *the fact itself* is all that is recorded. Water was evidently used; but we are not told any thing of the time when He began to baptize, nor of the description of persons baptized, nor of the mode and form of His baptism, nor of what followed after it. We are simply informed in John iii. 22., as a part of the gospel-narrative, that "Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He tarried with them and baptized." And the only farther mention of the subject is in reference to a report, "that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John," and that Jesus Himself did not administer the Ordinance in person, but that His disciples (meaning probably the twelve) baptized for Him. (John iv. 1, 2.) This is all that the Scripture says upon the subject. *Why* the Lord did not baptize with His own hands, we are not informed. It could not have been lest any should say that He had baptized in His own name; for men came to His baptism avowedly *as His disciples*. But *for obvious reasons* He chose to employ

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Himself in preaching, and the twelve in baptizing those whom He had taught: as He afterwards sent St. Paul “not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.” (1 Cor. i. 15.) He would also wish to prevent *the preference* which would doubtless have been given to *His own* administration of the Ordinance.

Of the baptism of the twelve disciples themselves we have no account. As the baptism of John was so general, it is probable that they, or the greater number of them, had partaken of it. Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, undoubtedly had. He was one of the two of John’s disciples who heard him say of Jesus, “Behold the Lamb of God!” and who was afterwards one of the twelve. It probably was the case with others of them also. But nothing is said respecting them. Tertullian observes, that with regard to them,—(the twelve)—“the peculiar privilege of the first accession to discipleship, and of the individual familiarity to which they were admitted with Him, had power to confer on them *the compendium* of baptism;” the sum and substance of it.

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No other mention is made of baptism by the Evangelists, until we come to the Commission which the Lord gave to His Apostles after His resurrection from the dead, except in one passage, which occurs in the report of His memorable conversation with Nicodemus, the Jewish ruler, contained in the Third Chapter of the Gospel according to St. John. Nicodemus having come to Jesus with the avowed desire to be instructed by Him, as “a teacher come from God,” “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (v. 3.) Nicodemus expresses his surprise at this saying, and asks, “How can a man be born when he is old?”—evidently shewing that he did not at all comprehend its meaning. Upon which the Lord repeats the asseveration, with some addition to it: “Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” (v. 5.) In this instance, as in every other, our endeavour shall be, to ascertain what the words of Scripture do really and simply mean. If there had been no intention on the part of Christ to make baptism with water an Ordinance of His Church or Kingdom upon earth, the expressions, “born of water and of the Spirit,” might still have been used by Him with great propriety; as John the Baptist had previously used the words, “He shall baptize you *with the Holy Ghost and fire:*” water being, as well as fire, an appropriate and beautiful emblem of the Holy Spirit. If the “cloven tongues like as of fire,” had *not* rested upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, the words of the Baptist, just referred to, had yet been strikingly applicable to the operations of the Holy Ghost; and the figure would have lost none of its force and fitness. Water too, in like manner, might have been connected by Christ with the mention of the Spirit, because of the similarity between their effects. But inasmuch as Christ Himself had been baptized, and was about to continue baptism in His Church, (not only during His personal Ministry upon earth, but when, after His return to Heaven, His gospel should be preached among all nations,) and as John’s baptism had been so general, and had drawn so much attention to the subject,—it is reasonable to conclude, that when Jesus spake to Nicodemus of a man’s being “born of water,” He meant his being baptized; and it is probable that Nicodemus, who knew well that baptism had been already used in the admission of proselytes into the Jewish Church, at once so understood His words. For, if not *altogether figurative*, some specific act must have been meant; and what could this be, but baptism? No explanation, therefore, was given to Nicodemus of the terms, “born of water,” because none was needed. Having begun, in v. 3, to speak of *a birth*, the Lord Jesus continues the same idea, and applies it to the other subject which He wished to introduce, namely, baptism. And this is not the only instance of the use of such phraseology: for, when arguing with the Sadducees about the raising of the dead, He says of the just, that they are “*the children of God;*”—and then, carrying on the idea, He calls them, “*the children of the resurrection.*” (Luke xx. 36.) To be “born of water,” then, is to be baptized with water; and this, together with being “born of the Spirit,” Christ declares to be necessary to an entrance into “the kingdom of God.” By “the Kingdom of God” is here meant the Visible Church of Christ upon earth; the members of which are therein prepared for the state of eternal glory in Heaven. This shows us of what characters Christ designed His Visible Church to consist; namely, of those who are born of the Spirit, and baptized with water. And thus the true Church of Christ may well be described as ‘*A Congregation of faithful men, in the which the pure word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly ministered according to Christ’s Ordinance.*’ (Article XIX. of the Church of England.) Christ would have His Church a Visible Body, that it might be “The Pillar and Ground of the truth;”—to maintain the truth and to hold it forth to the world. As there had been before His coming, so it was meet that there should continue to be, an associated and authorized Body of God’s Worshippers and Witnesses, to which additions might from time to time be made of “such as should be saved,” (Acts ii. 47.), and by which Christ’s religion might be spread abroad and propagated. Into this Body ‘faithful men,’ or those who are “born again,” are incorporated by baptism. And it is of this spiritual kingdom, which “is not of this world,” that Christ speaks in the verse we are now considering. The Kingdom of God, or the Kingdom of Heaven, has sometimes in Scripture a more extensive signification, and includes both good and bad,—the true Israel and those “which say they are Jews and are not.” Since man cannot know the heart of his fellow-man, he must accept his profession, where it is not contradicted by plain and palpable evidence: and hence it comes to pass, that ‘in the Visible Church the evil will be mingled with the good.’ (Article XXVI.) But Christ, the Great Head of the Church, does not acknowledge the evil as belonging to Him, or as having any right to a place in His Church or kingdom. Where has He ever prescribed or demanded or allowed *a merely external profession and service?* What did He say to those who were satisfied with this? “*Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me!*” (Matt. xv. 7, 8.) And if this spiritual service, this service of the heart, was required of *the Jews*, and evidently symbolized by their distinguishing Ordinance of

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circumcision, and if *they* were branded by the Lord as “hypocrites” who did not pay it,—no wonder that it should be designed and required by the Gospel! Otherwise, Christ would be the minister of hypocrisy, formality, and sin! But He Himself has told us, that He soweth *good seed* only in His field; and that it is His enemy who sows *the tares*. (Matt. xiii. 37, 38.) The wicked and such as be void of a lively faith, and all who “have a form of godliness but denying the power thereof,” are considered as *intruders* into the Church of Christ, and as such will be dealt with by Him at the last. This was God’s complaint of His Church of old:—“Among my people are found wicked men!” (Jer. v. 26.) And He remonstrates with such characters for professing that they knew Him, while their conduct was inconsistent with their profession. “Unto the wicked God saith, What hast thou to do that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth?” (Ps. l. 16.) And the Lord Jesus saith the same to such like persons. “Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke vi. 46.) “Friend, how camest thou in hither, not having a wedding garment?” (Matt. xxii. 12.) And He declares that in the last day He “will profess unto them, I never knew you.” (Matt. vii. 23.) He calls them “goats,” not “sheep;” though while on earth they find admittance into His fold. (Matt. xxv. 33.) Of such is *not* the kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God, or ‘the Visible Church of Christ, is a *Congregation of faithful men.*’ Now, to enter into this kingdom, or, which is the same thing, to be an ostensible member of this spiritual Society, a man must be “born of water and of the Spirit.” No one can be a *real* and *recognised* member of Christ’s Church on earth, except he be baptized and born of the Spirit. The necessity of being “born of the Spirit” in order to our becoming the subjects of Christ’s kingdom is shown by Him in what immediately follows. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh:”—(v. 6.) that which proceeds from and is produced by carnal and corrupt nature is carnal and corrupt also. Hence the necessity of a great and thorough change. “Ye *must* be *born again.*” (v. 7.) Of this change the Holy Spirit is—to keep up the idea introduced by Christ—the Parent or Father. And as that which generates, generates its like, so “that which is born of the Spirit is spirit:” in other words,—the abstract being here used by Christ for the concrete, (and by its use He more strongly expresses the reality of what might justly be called a *birth* and the communication of an *entirely new nature*,)—he that partakes of this birth of the Spirit is thereby made a spiritual man, whereas before he was a carnal and corrupt man. And since Christ came (as we have seen) to set up a spiritual kingdom, (for “the kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;”) (Rom. xiv. 17,) none can *really* belong to this kingdom, except spiritual persons. And to this agrees what the Lord said on another occasion; “Verily I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, *he shall not enter therein.*” (Mark x. 15.) And if not real members of His Kingdom on earth, we shall certainly not enter into His Kingdom of glory. But to be *recognised* as well as *real* members of His Church, or subjects of His kingdom, we must be “born of water,” or baptized. This is Christ’s appointed Ordinance. He ordained the use of it in His Church, while He was present with His disciples, and He subsequently enjoined the same in the case of all who should believe His gospel. Baptism with water, therefore, is not to be omitted, wherever it may be had. And, surely, the reason which Jesus Himself gave to John for seeking this Ordinance, ought to influence those who desire to be numbered among His friends and followers: “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness!”

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But while these two things, baptism and the birth of the Spirit, are declared by Christ to be necessary to a certain end,—namely, an entrance into the Kingdom of God, or Visible Church of Christ upon earth,—there is not the slightest intimation given by Him that they are *necessarily* connected with each other. Not a word is said by Him from which we can deduce this. Two things are often required for a definite purpose;—two witnesses, for instance, to prove a fact;—an invitation and a wedding-garment to entitle any one to be a guest at a marriage-feast;—but these may be quite independent of one another. It cannot be pretended that *one thing only* is spoken of by Christ. The birth of the Spirit is twice mentioned by itself, and once in connection with baptism by water. Baptism, then, and the birth of Spirit are clearly not identical,—not one and the same thing. And *their necessary connection* is neither here, nor any where else in Scripture, asserted. It is a statement, not supported by a tittle of evidence; but, on the other hand, contradicted by express testimonies of Scripture, and by very general experience. The putting of these two things together in one sentence is surely no proof of their necessary connection. Had the two been necessarily connected,—had baptism been the appointed channel for the conveyance of the Spirit, Christ would undoubtedly have said so. Or rather, it would have been sufficient for Him to have said, “Except a man *be baptized*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;” and He certainly would not have omitted the mention of baptism, as He did omit it, in His first solemn asseveration to Nicodemus. The necessity of *the birth of the Spirit* was evidently what Jesus wished to enforce upon His inquirer. This therefore was the *first* thing spoken of by Him. In His second address He introduces water-baptism; as this would serve to make the spiritual subject clearer, and because He would show that baptism was henceforth to be the token of the Covenant: but how Nicodemus was to conclude from the manner in which it was mentioned, that water was to be the means of communicating the new birth, or that the two things were always to be found together, it is not easy to imagine. Especially as in the very same address he was told, that, in giving the new birth, the Holy Spirit acts as “the wind *blowing where it listeth.*” Now baptism must always be administered *at a specific time*; but is this the case with the blowing of the wind? Did Christ then use an inappropriate metaphor? He plainly tells Nicodemus, that as “a master of Israel” he ought to have understood what He was speaking of. But what is there in the Old Testament from which Nicodemus could have learned the necessary connection of the new birth with any outward Ordinance? Was the circumcision of the heart always connected with the circumcision of the flesh? Had not the Lord, in the time of Moses, bidden the people of Israel to “circumcise the foreskin of their hearts”? (Deut. x. 16.) And had He not said of them by Jeremiah, “All the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart”? (ix.

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26.) *This* was the doctrine to which Nicodemus had been accustomed:—*the necessity* of both the outward and the inward circumcision, but *not* their necessary connection with each other. So likewise with the new birth and baptism.

And as Scripture is, and must be, consistent with Scripture, let the latter part of Christ's address to Nicodemus be compared with His subsequent directions concerning baptism, and compared also with the writings of His Apostles, and it will be seen, that *faith in Him*, which He so frequently mentions as leading to salvation, *is that with which the birth of the Spirit is connected*, and that *this faith is invariably required before the administration of the Ordinance to any*. How then can baptism with water convey the birth of the Spirit, unless Christ and His Apostles be at issue with each other, and the order of things, which He Himself appointed in His Church, be inverted? St. John expressly declares in his Gospel, (i. 12, 13.) that "as many as received Him, (Jesus Christ) to them *gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name*; which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." And in his First Epistle, (v. 1.) "*Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God.*" And the order which Christ intended for the administration of baptism by His Apostles was thus laid down for them;—"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." And they acted accordingly. No statement was ever more capable of proof than this, that the birth of the Spirit may be without baptism, and baptism without the birth of the Spirit. Can any doubt, that the penitent thief on the cross was "born of the Spirit," who yet was not baptized? Can any venture to affirm, that Simon Magus, though baptized, was "born of the Spirit"? Did not Peter tell him, that he "had neither part nor lot in the matter, for his heart was not right in the sight of God"? Man must not put asunder what God hath joined together; but neither must he of his own authority join together what God hath left asunder. We cannot be in manifested communion with the Church of Christ, if we wilfully neglect the Ordinance which He appointed for His disciples; but we may be baptized, or "born of water" and so be in professed communion with His Church, as Simon Magus was, and yet be, like him, void of a lively faith and the inspiration of Christ's Spirit. As it has been well observed upon this subject; 'It would violate the principles of common sense and confound all specific modes of instruction, to call that a *birth* at which nothing was born, and that person *new-born* whose moral principles had received no change.'<sup>[20]</sup> The notion of an initial act—of the communication of something in baptism, which may never be perceived, and never produce any holy fruit,—has no sanction from Sacred Scripture. Our Lord here says nothing like it. He speaks of a *second birth*,—*a new existence*,—and that of a spiritual nature. "*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit*" (v. 6.) The language is the same as that which describes a man's own entrance into this world of life and activity. And His Apostles, when writing of this spiritual birth, always ascribe to it perceptible and powerful effects. "We know," writes St. John, (1 Ep. v. 18,) "that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not." And again, (v. 4,) "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world." And again, (iii. 10,) "*In this the children of God are manifest*, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God." But if the birth of the Spirit, by which men are made the children of God, necessarily accompany baptism, they may be at one and the same time the children of God and the children of the devil! They may be the children of God, as being born of His Spirit in baptism, and they may be "manifested" to be the children of the devil by committing sin; for thousands who have been baptized never show the least spiritual disposition, but live and die under the dominion of iniquity! But it is said, 'The Spirit was given to them, and they lost it:—they were God's children, but they ceased to be such.' Can *that*, with a shadow of reason, be said to have been *lost*, of the possession of which there never was the slightest evidence? Can *that*, with any propriety, be said to *cease*, which, if the statement of the Apostle is to be the standard of judgment, never began? "In this," says St. John, "the children of God *are manifest*." Of thousands who have been baptized it may be asked, when were they *manifested* to be the children of God? And the answer of truth must be, *Never*. They *never* did righteousness:—they *always* committed sin. They were never therefore "born of God:"—they never partook of the birth of the Spirit. "They went out from us," St. John says again of some who had been nominal members of the Christian Church, "they went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us." (1 Ep. ii. 19.) The only *seminal* principle of grace which the Scripture recognizes, is that, which this same Apostle speaks of; (iii. 9.) "*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*" This is in perfect harmony with Christ's words to Nicodemus;—"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and *thou hearest the sound thereof*:" thou knowest that it is blowing by the effects which it produces: "*so is every one who is born of the Spirit.*" (v. 8.) But to believe that "the wind bloweth," when a leaf is not shaken, nor the slightest murmur in the air heard, is so contradictory to the evidence of the senses, that after this we might believe anything. Transubstantiation itself need not be rejected by us. Why not believe a *material* as well as a *moral* change, if the exercise of the understanding and of the senses is to be excluded? Nay, transubstantiation has a greater show of Scripture-authority in its favour. Christ *did say* of the bread and wine, "This is my Body;" "This is my Blood:" but He never said, "Every one who is born of water is born also of the Holy Spirit." The uniform tenor of His teaching was, that men's profession and principles and privileges should be tried by their practical effects. "By their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. vii. 20.) And as transubstantiation might as well be believed, as that every baptized person is necessarily "born of the Spirit," so, to claim the power of absolutely setting God on work to new-create the soul in baptism, is little short of the presumption of the Church of Rome, which asserts the power of her priests to turn the bread and wine in the Sacrament of the Supper into Christ's real Body and Blood! It would *not* then be true, (as declared in John i. 13,) that "the sons of God we born, *not of the will of man*;" for baptism is administered *at the will of man*;—whensoever and to whomsoever he

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pleases.

The next thing to be noticed in Scripture in connection with this subject, is *the Charge or Commission* which the Lord Jesus gave to His Apostles after His resurrection from the dead and before His ascension into Heaven. In Matt, xxviii. 19., we find the Lord saying to the Eleven, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations;"—or, as it is in the margin, "make disciples of all nations;"—"baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In Mark xvi. 15, 16., the Commission to the Eleven is thus given; "And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." Now in both these passages the same course is prescribed, which had been previously adopted by Christ Himself and by His forerunner, John the Baptist. They (Christ and John) first made disciples; and then baptized them, in token of their being disciples. And the Apostles were to do the same. They were first to preach the gospel, and then, when any believed it,—or, as God only knoweth the hearts, (for the discerning of spirits was not possessed by *all* who preached the gospel, and does not appear to have been exercised in ordinary ministrations,) when any professed to believe it, without giving cause for a suspicion of insincerity, they were to baptize them; and when the profession was sincere, the promise of salvation was *assured* unto them. And according to these directions the Apostles and other preachers of the gospel acted. The Jews had hitherto been the peculiar people and Church of God. But this state of things was to last no longer. The gospel was certainly to be *first* preached to the Jews, but not to be confined to them. It was to be preached "to every creature."—All nations were to hear the glad tidings of salvation by Jesus Christ, and to be called to "the obedience of faith." "Repentance and remission of sins were to be preached in Christ's name among all nations." *The teaching*, then, which preceded baptism, and by which disciples were made to Christ, was *the preaching of the gospel*. (Of this we have a direct proof in Acts xiv. 21. "And when they (Paul and Barnabas) *had preached the gospel to that city and had taught many*;"—or, as the latter word properly signifies, "had brought many to the faith of Christ and made them His disciples.") And when the gospel was believed, the Sacrament of baptism was to be administered, and then farther instruction to be given in all things which Christ willed that His disciples should do. For thus continuing baptism as the outward and visible token of believing upon Him, the Lord Jesus gave no reason. The Ordinance, in fact, spake for itself. The design of Christ's death being to "redeem from all iniquity, and to purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works," what outward rite could more suitably be enjoined upon those who became His disciples, than the washing with pure water? As we have seen already, every proselyte to the Jews' religion from among the heathen was washed, or baptized, as well as circumcised. In founding the New Testament Church, which was to consist of some of all nations on equal terms with the Jews, the Lord lays aside the distinguishing Ordinance of the Old Testament Church,—circumcision,—and retains that which was *its appendage* in the case of Gentile converts, namely, baptism. And how delightfully consonant with the character of the New Dispensation was this proceeding! Instead of the painful and bloody rite of circumcision, water only is used;—pleasant and refreshing; and moreover, still more significant: for while circumcision conveyed only the *negative* idea of the putting away of sin, baptism includes both the removal of uncleanness and the production of its opposite state of purity. In the Commission, then, which the Lord gave to His Apostles, we notice these two things:—first, the universal proclamation to be made of the gospel; and secondly, the limitation of baptism to those who should believe it. No mention is made of the manner in which baptism was to be administered, (of *the form of words* we shall speak presently) nor is there any distinction of country, condition, sex or age. Every one who should be willing to give in his name to Christ and to be saved by Him, was to partake of the rite of baptism. And this seems the proper place for the remark, that as the use of water was thus made common to both Dispensations, and as no new directions were given, the Apostles would naturally be led to pursue the course which had previously prevailed with respect to the baptism of proselytes to the Jews' religion. These proselytes had been worshippers of idols, and were therefore to be washed or baptized, in token of their putting away of their idolatry and its accompanying impurities. Proselytes to Christ—from all but the Jewish people—would be of the same description. Circumcision was to cease, and baptism with water alone to be retained, and to be applied alike to Jews and Gentiles. Why then should not the same course be pursued as heretofore? If the children of proselytes had been for the most part baptized with their parents, why should not the same be continued?—The children of believing Jews had received circumcision when eight days old, as the token of the Covenant. Why should the children of those Jews who believed in Christ,—in whom that very Covenant was confirmed, of which circumcision was the token,—why should the children of these believing Jews not have the token of the Covenant, as well as the children of their believing forefathers? The Covenant is one and the same. "The Lord said to Abraham, I will establish my Covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, in their generations, for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, for an everlasting possession." (Gen. xvii. 7, 8.) These promises were made to Abraham, as "the father of all them that should believe." The first thing here promised is, that "the Lord would be a God unto Abraham and his seed." [27] And do not the words of Christ, when He commanded His Apostles to baptize those who should become His disciples, *convey the same idea*?—"baptizing them in, or into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost"? What is this but a declaration, that the Triune Jehovah should be their God? The other part of the promise is, that "Canaan" should be their "everlasting possession." This by St. Paul is called a "promise, that he should be the heir of the world:"—which chiefly meant, that he and his true seed should inherit Heaven. And does not St. Paul *decide the question* as to the

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continuance of Abraham's Covenant by asserting, that believers in Christ are heirs of Heaven *in virtue of this very promise made to Abraham?* "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." (Gal. iii. 29.) The Covenant being thus the same, were children not to be brought into the blessings and the bond of it, *simply because the token of it was changed?* If (as it has been often observed on this subject) the Lord had been pleased to continue the original token of the Covenant made with Abraham, and had commanded His Apostles and Ministers to circumcise, in the place of baptizing, all who should embrace His gospel, would they not have continued the practice of the Jewish Church, and have circumcised the children of all believing parents? How much rather then, when He saith, Wash; simply baptize with water;—it is my will, that this mild but significant element and emblem be henceforth exclusively used in my Church! And having been hitherto used in the admission of Gentile proselytes into the Jewish Church, it forms a connection with the Covenant made with Abraham, *more manifest* than any new Ordinance could possibly have done. Therefore there was no need of any directions respecting the baptism of infants, as this would naturally follow upon the continuance of the Abrahamic Covenant. Nay, after all that had taken place, if Christ had not intended that the children of believers should partake of this Sacrament, as well as the parents, a prohibition to this effect would have been needed. But nothing of the kind was given. On the contrary, (to pass on for a moment to another portion of Scripture,) the very first day on which the Apostles began to execute the Commission which Christ had given them, Peter said to those who expressed a desire to become Christ's disciples, "*The promise is unto you and to your children.*" (Acts ii. 39.) This certainly did not look like an intention of excluding children from sharing with their parents in the Ordinances of the Church of God!

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It has been stated, that some farther notice would be taken of *the form of words* to be used in the administration of baptism. Whether the Lord Jesus meant, that the precise form, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," should invariably be employed, may admit of a question. Baptized persons were doubtless dedicated to the service of the glorious and blessed Trinity. They were baptized *into* the name of the Triune God. But it cannot be certainly proved, that the Lord Jesus intended that these very words should be used on each occasion. And it is remarkable, that in the subsequent account of instances of baptism in The Acts of the Apostles, it is called "being baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Irenæus observes, that this might be the putting of a part for the whole, and that so it would be generally understood. The safest course has, however, been taken in the Christian Church by the retention of *the precise form* found in the Commission given by Christ to His Apostles; and no objection can be justly brought against it.

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This is all that is found in The Gospels, *directly* applicable to the Sacrament of Baptism.

But there is a circumstance recorded in three of them, which cannot be overlooked in connection with the subject of the administration of baptism to children;—though baptism itself is not mentioned in it. St. Matthew, St. Mark, and St. Luke, relate the bringing of little children or infants, or both, either by their parents or others interested for them, to Christ, "that He should put His hands on them and pray for them." The disciples, unwilling probably that their Master should be troubled with such an application, "rebuked those who brought them: but when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased" with the disciples, "and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And He took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them." (Mark x. 13-16.) What doubtless increased Christ's displeasure at the conduct of His disciples was their evident forgetfulness of what had passed a short time before; when, a dispute having arisen among them who should be the greatest, He set a child in the midst of them and proposed him as a pattern of humility, unto which He declared all the subjects of His kingdom must be conformed. With respect to the children thus brought to Christ, He only acted in His usual benevolent manner, when He complied with the request made of Him concerning them. He was asked to "put His hands on them and to pray,"—that is, for a blessing to rest upon them. This therefore He did. The word "blessed"—He "blessed them"—is the same with that used by Himself in His sermon on the Mount: "bless them that curse you:"—the meaning of which is, 'Pray that blessings may come upon those who call down curses upon you.' And when Jesus blessed the children which were brought to Him, He commended them by prayer to the compassion and favour of His heavenly Father. This is all that we can legitimately conclude from what is here said. Jesus manifested the same kindness of heart towards the rich young ruler, mentioned immediately afterwards; when "beholding him, He loved him;" though this object of His love went away from Him, and there is every reason to fear that his riches proved the cause of his ruin. The same disposition of benevolence which led the Lord Jesus to pray for the children that were brought to Him, led Him also to pray for His murderers; for while hanging on the cross, He cried, "Father, forgive them." But, were all that were engaged in putting Him to death really forgiven? Did not many of them continue in impenitence and unbelief? Undoubtedly they did. It is impossible, therefore, to conclude *absolutely* that even these children which were brought to Christ were *eternally saved*, whatever *hope* and charitable opinion may be entertained on the subject. But He farther said respecting them,—"*Of such is the kingdom of God.*" What then did He mean by this declaration? It is to be observed, that this was said by Jesus of these children, *not after* they had been brought to Him and blessed by Him, but *before* they were so brought, and *as the reason why they should be brought to Him:* "For of such is the kingdom of God." Now it is evident that Christ does not say this of children as they are *by nature*. He Himself had before described the heart of man, that is, the nature of man, as full of all evil. (See Mark vii. 26.) And though these children might have been circumcised, yet *this* does not appear to have been contemplated by Christ when He

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spake of them: and we know from what St. Paul says, as well as from other Scriptures, that the outward circumcision was by no means always accompanied with the circumcision of the heart. Nor does there appear to have been anything *peculiar* in this case, to which Christ's observations were confined. If so, we should have nothing whatever to do with it. It seems to be of children, *as children*, that He here speaks;—not of *children brought to Him*, (as already noticed) but of *children in general*: "Of such is the kingdom of God." These words, *strictly taken*, would intimate, that they were in the kingdom of God already; for He does not say this of them *after* that they had been blessed by Him, but He says it of them *before*. It was not, therefore, *His reception of them* which caused Him to speak thus concerning them. The true view of the subject seems to be this;—that, while the whole transaction wears a kind and gracious aspect toward man's helpless offspring, Jesus had special regard in it to *the dispositions found in children*;—for by reason of infantile weakness corruption is then unable to manifest itself, and all appears to be gentleness and loveliness;—pride and malice and such like evils being necessarily absent, and humility and lowliness and dependance and such like tempers being by the same necessity present. So that it was with regard to *these*, rather than to *the subjects of them*, that Jesus said, "Of such is the kingdom of God." This view harmonizes exactly with what He said in immediate connection with the words we are considering: "Verily, I say unto you, whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a *little child*, he shall not enter therein." The great object of the Lord evidently was, to set forth children, both as to what is *not* seen in them, and what *is* found in their meek, passive, harmless, submissive, and dependant state, as the pattern for His disciples' imitation;—as, in fact, the exhibition of what must be found in every one, who would be a real subject of His kingdom. And that it was of *the age of infancy or childhood*, and not of the persons of the children themselves, that Christ was here speaking, is confirmed by a reference to the circumstance already mentioned, which is related by St. Matthew, in the beginning of the eighteenth Chapter, and which had occurred not long before the bringing of the children to Him. "The disciples came unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily, I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as *little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child,"—that is, so as to be as this little child is,—*"the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven."* Now it cannot be supposed, that this child was selected by Christ as having any peculiar excellency in him. *Any child* would doubtless have served His purpose:—the child of a Gentile as well as of a Jew. Neither *the nature* of the child, nor *the state of the child's soul in the sight of God*, had any thing to do with the use which the Lord here makes of him. It was *the state of childhood* that Christ evidently had respect unto, and this He makes the model of His disciples. Just as David had said,—*"My soul is even as a weaned child;"* and as St. Paul afterwards wrote to the Corinthians,—*"In malice be ye children."* And if farther evidence that this was Christ's meaning be needed, it is found in the transition which He, as it were, insensibly makes from the *"little children"* to *"believers in Him;"* *"those little ones,"* (the word used by Him being changed,) *"those little ones,"* He calls them, *"which believe in me;"*—evidently referring to such as regard themselves to be the meanest and most humble of His disciples. With respect to children themselves, personally considered, the words of Christ seem only to convey a general expression of good will toward them,—to be understood and applied in conformity with other declarations of the Inspired Word. As to the bearing of this whole passage upon *baptism*, it is impossible to prove by it the connection of the new birth with baptism, or indeed anything about baptism at all;—except that it affords great encouragement to godly parents to bring their children to this Ordinance, and in it to present and dedicate them to the Lord their God. If we attempt to force the application of the passage, it may be turned against ourselves, and used as an argument for doing without the baptism of children altogether: for Christ does not say anything about the baptism of the children brought to Him, although baptism was then in use among His disciples. His silence respecting it is no valid argument against it; but it prevents the possibility of proving anything *absolutely* as to the effect of baptism from this occurrence. In truth, the circumstances of the cases must be analogous, before *any* application can fairly be made of it. Children must not be brought in gross ignorance and utter carelessness to be baptized, that they may receive their name from a minister, or for some other merely temporal object, without any regard to Christ or His grace, and this be said to correspond with what was done for the children in the history before us. This is to profane Christ's Sacrament; and shall the profanation of it be attended with a blessing? No wonder that baptized children show no benefit from their baptism, when it has really not been a bringing of them to Christ at all:—Christ having never been thought of from first to last. If an appeal be made to the supposed efficacy of *the Ordinance itself*, then this passage has nothing to do with the subject. Other Scriptures must be resorted to, wherein reference *is* made to baptism. From what was done and said on this occasion, believing parents, anxious for the salvation of their children, may draw much encouragement to bring them to Christ in baptism, and to pray and hope for a blessing, in connection with the subsequent use of means for their spiritual good: and they who act thus, comply much more with His mind and spirit, than those who withhold their children from the Ordinance. But no absolute and unconditional benefit in baptism can by any fair process of reasoning be deduced from it.

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We proceed, then, to examine the passages in 'The Acts of the Apostles,' which relate to the subject of Baptism; and we shall there see the directions which Christ gave them concerning it carried into effect.

No sooner had the Apostles begun to execute their important Commission by preaching the gospel on the day of Pentecost, than God gave testimony to their word by convincing many of sin,

especially of the sin of "crucifying the Lord of glory;" and they "said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles," (as we read in Acts ii. 37,) "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" To this Peter answered, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call." In this exhortation, the principle enjoined by Christ upon the Apostles is found. Repentance and faith are first required. For the expressions, "Be baptized *in the name of Jesus Christ*," do certainly mean, "Make an open profession of your believing in Jesus Christ, by being baptized in His name." That this is their meaning there can be no doubt, when we consider what is said immediately afterwards: (v. 41.) "Then *they that gladly received his word*" (and how is the word received but by faith? See 1 Thess. ii. 13,) "were baptized; and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers." Here, then, things were as Christ intended them to be. They who were convinced of sin ask what they shall do—that is, to be saved. They are told to repent, and openly to confess Christ—that is, that they believed in Him as the Saviour—by being baptized. And they are assured, that upon doing *these things*—(the whole exhortation being taken together) they should receive "remission of their sins" and "the gift of the Holy Ghost." They gladly received the word preached to them; and they were then baptized; and while their baptism was a public profession of repentance and faith on their part, it would doubtless be a means of grace to them, and a seal and pledge on God's part of the forgiveness of their sins and of His good-will and favour towards them. And this was the right and legitimate use of the Ordinance.

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The next instance recorded in The Acts of the Apostles is that of the people of Samaria, to whom Philip went and preached Christ, (viii. 5.) They had for a long time been bewitched with the sorceries of a certain man, called Simon; but, it is added, "when they believed Philip, preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women." The same order is seen here, as at Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. They first *believe*, and then *are baptized*. But now a very different case presents itself to us. Simon, the sorcerer himself, is said also to have believed and been baptized, and to have "continued with Philip," (having of course ceased from his sorceries) "and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done" by him. Some think, that by pretending to be Philip's disciple Simon hoped to be able to do the same; for that his opinion of Philip was, that he was but a more skilful sorcerer than himself. It appears that the Holy Ghost—by which the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, the ability to speak divers languages and such like, are undoubtedly meant,—had not fallen upon any of the people of Samaria at their baptism, but was reserved to be bestowed in answer to the prayers of the Apostles and by the imposition of their hands. For "when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: who, when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost: then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost." (v. 14, 15.) The effect of this gift must have been immediately perceptible by others; for it led to that bold and blasphemous offer of money by Simon to the Apostles, which betrayed the hypocrisy, and pride, and wickedness of his heart. "When Simon saw, that through laying on of the Apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost." (v. 18, 19.) Peter's indignant reply to him proves, that, though he had been baptized, he was in heart a sorcerer still. "The dog had turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire." (2 Peter ii. 22.) No change whatever had taken place in his character. And no change seems to have taken place in him afterwards; if we may judge from what he said to the Apostles. For when Peter denounced the just judgment of God against him, and declared that he "had neither part nor lot in the matter," there was no sign of real penitence in his expressions. He deprecated the judgment indeed, and asked the Apostles to pray for him that it might not come upon him. "Pray ye to the Lord for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me." (v. 24.) But even Pharaoh went farther than this. He said to Moses and Aaron, "Intreat the Lord, that He may take away this death from me;" but he also added, "I have sinned:" "I am wicked:"—a confession, which Simon never made; for it is to be feared that the conviction of it he never felt. And his case incontestably proves, that professions and Ordinances avail nothing, unless the "heart" be also "right in the sight of God."

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In this same Chapter we have an account of the baptism of the Ethiopian Eunuch. As far as his knowledge reached, this interesting person was a sincere and devout worshipper of the true God: but, as in the case of Cornelius afterwards, it was necessary that he should be brought to the clear and full knowledge of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Philip therefore is sent to instruct him, and is gladly received by him as his teacher. Philip, taking as his text the place of Scripture which he found the Eunuch reading, "preached unto him Jesus." And his word was mixed with faith in him that heard it. And coming to a certain water, the Eunuch, having learned what was the rite of initiation which Christ had appointed, was anxious to take this opportunity of being openly received into the number of His disciples; and he therefore asked Philip, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" Our Authorized Version has a reply from Philip and a confession of faith by the Eunuch, which are not found in many very ancient Manuscripts. Beza says of this verse, "God forbid I should think it ought to be expunged, since it contains such a confession of faith, as was in the Apostolic ages required of adults, in order to their being admitted to baptism." But whether it be genuine or not, is of no material consequence. Christ had confined baptism to believers, in His instructions to His Apostles; and this verse only repeats the limitation. "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayst" be baptized. And as for the

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confession of faith attributed to the Eunuch, it is plain that he was prepared and willing to make it. "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." Both he and Philip then went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. In what manner, we are not told; nor do even the expressions, "into the water," decide whether it was by immersion or the pouring or sprinkling of some of the water on his person. If the mode of administration had been essential to the validity of the Sacrament, no doubt it would have been mentioned. But neither here nor any where else is this the case. The Eunuch, then, having thus received the grace of the Covenant and the seal of the Covenant, confirmed too by the sign of Philip's miraculous removal from him,—“went on his way rejoicing.” (v. 39.)

In the next Chapter, the ninth, we have an account of the conversion and baptism of Saul of Tarsus. The Lord Jesus appeared to him as he went to Damascus to persecute the disciples which might be found there: and Saul, having fallen to the ground and being told that that same Jesus whom he persecuted stood before him, exclaimed with all humility and entire submission, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" One of the most astonishing instances of a sudden change of mind on record! The Lord then bade Saul "arise" from the earth, in order that he might hear what more He had to say to him. And well might Saul be overwhelmed by the communication which the Lord Jesus proceeds to make to him! In the account given in this ninth Chapter, it is briefly stated that the Lord commanded him to "go into the city," (Damascus) and that "it should be told him what he must do." This no doubt was a part of His communication. But by a reference to the account of this transaction given by himself before Agrippa, as recorded in the xxvith Chapter of this Book, it appears that the Lord made known to Saul *at that very time* much of His mind and will concerning him; and that He said to him, "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a Minister and a Witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." (v. 16-18) After this, Saul went into Damascus, and was three days without sight or food. Ananias was then sent to him by the Lord Jesus; and having put his hands upon him that he might receive his sight, and having repeated to him the Commission which Jesus had in person given to him, said, (as we read in the account of this event given in the xxiind Chapter,) "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." And he "arose, and was baptized." This address of Ananias to Saul, taken by itself, would seem to connect the forgiveness or putting away of sin with the act of baptism. But were not Saul's sins forgiven before his baptism? And did he not know that they were forgiven? Suppose a subject to have a very mistaken view of his Sovereign's title to the crown, and an ignorant but very fervid zeal for some other. Suppose him not to have taken due pains to correct his error, and to be at the same time under the influence of much high-mindedness and self-confidence. He takes up arms against his Prince, and for a season is very successful in his efforts. But suddenly he finds himself in his power:—and at the same time his eyes are opened;—and he is convinced of the mistake which he had made, and of the delusion under which he had been acting. He now casts himself at his Sovereign's feet, and professes his willingness to be at his absolute disposal for the future. Suppose the generous Monarch to reply;—'I know that thou wast engaged in a blind and unequal contest with me: ("it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks:") but I am come to tell thee, that I have appointed thee my Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, and am about to send thee forth to a distant kingdom, there to transact for me some difficult and important business, in which my honour and interest and the interest of my subjects are greatly concerned: ("For I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a Minister and a Witness of these things which thou hast seen:") I will from time to time communicate most confidentially with thee: ("and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee:") all my authority and power shall be put forth for thy personal preservation: ("delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee:") and nothing shall be wanting on my part to make thine Ambassage successful.' ("to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan unto God, &c.") Would this subject, after such a communication and commission,—delivered too by his Prince in person—have any doubt on his mind respecting the pardon of his rebellion? He might for a few days retire into secret, to reflect on his case;—to consider the evil of his own conduct, and the noble and generous manner in which he had been treated, when he might justly have been dealt with in a very different way. But his preferment of necessity involved his pardon and his full and complete establishment in his Sovereign's favour. How could he, in the very nature of things, execute the Commission given to him, if he were to be put to death for his treason? Nevertheless, it might be very expedient, that a public manifestation should be made to the kingdom of this change in the state of things: for the Prince's visit to his subject was in secret, though not the least suspicion could attach to the truth and sincerity of it. A public Ceremony might, therefore, take place, at which his own change of mind and his Sovereign's pardon might be proclaimed, and his sealed Commission delivered into his hands:—but this, however important, would follow the previous interview as a matter of course. What has thus been *supposed* was more than fulfilled in the case of Saul of Tarsus: for no communication among men could equal the condescension and grace of the Lord Jesus towards him and the confidence which He reposed in him. And the manner in which Ananias spake to Saul of his baptism seems to convey the last-mentioned idea; namely, that, however necessary, it was to take place as a matter of course. "And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." This washing away of his sins in baptism was a mystical or emblematical washing. It was a public manifestation of his penitence and his pardon. It was on his part an open avowal of submission to Christ; and on the part of the Lord Jesus Christ it was an

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equally open avowal of the acceptance of his submission, and a seal of his sonship and security. Hereby his faith would be confirmed, and his grace increased by virtue of "calling on the name of the Lord." But how could this confirmation and increase take place, unless faith and grace had been possessed by him previously?

The baptism of Cornelius and his company, recorded in Chapter x., is the next instance we meet with in Scripture of the administration of this Sacrament of the Christian Church. This case is remarkable as being the first-fruits of the Gentiles unto Christ. Peter—to whom Christ had given "the keys of the kingdom of Heaven," (Matt. xvi. 19,) that is, the high privilege of opening the door of faith both to the Jews and to the Gentiles,—was sent by God to preach the gospel to this Roman Centurion. His objections, as a Jew, to go unto one of another nation having been removed by a vision, Peter went to the house of Cornelius, where he found him and his kinsmen and near friends assembled together to receive and to hear him. He faithfully preached Christ unto them: and while he spake those important words, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that, through His name, whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins," "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." Under the influence of the Spirit they "spake with tongues, and magnified God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord." (43-47.) In the case of the people of Samaria, the Holy Ghost was not given when they were baptized, but *some time after*;—when the Apostles Peter and John, came down from Jerusalem and laid their hands upon them. In the case of Cornelius and his friends, the same Holy Spirit was given before their baptism, and while Peter was preaching the gospel to them. Thus it was not always *at* the administration of the Ordinance that the Holy Ghost was given. And though the immediate effect of this gift of the Spirit was manifested in the power to speak with tongues and to prophesy, yet it also enabled and disposed them to "magnify God:" thereby showing, that His ordinary sanctifying operations were included. Well then might Cornelius and they who were with him receive the outward and visible sign of baptism by water, since they had already received the thing signified by it!

In Chapter xvi., two very interesting cases are recorded, which are worthy of particular attention. They occurred at Philippi, in Macedonia; to which country St. Paul and his company had been called by a vision to preach the gospel there. The first of these is the case of a woman named Lydia. In the 13th and 14th verses the sacred historian writes; "And on the Sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we spake unto the women which resorted thither. And a certain woman, named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard us: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul." In consequence of the opening of her heart by the Lord, she heard to her soul's profit. She received the gospel which Paul preached. We are then told concerning her, that "she was baptized, and her household." And her faith brought forth fruit: for she immediately invited the Apostle and those who were with him, to come and abide at her house; and she would not take a denial. They therefore abode with her many days. Another case then occurred, which served to show why they had been called to preach the gospel in Macedonia. Paul and Silas having been thrown into prison for casting a spirit of divination out of a certain damsel, the Lord sent a great earthquake at midnight, which opened the doors of the prison, and awoke the jailor; who, fearing that the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself; when Paul assured him that they were all there. Upon this, "he sprang in, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Paul and Silas immediately preached the gospel to him, saying, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." They then at greater length "spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house." The same success attended the word, as in the case of Lydia. And his faith, like her's, wrought by love; for he immediately began to show all the attention in his power to Paul and Silas. And as Lydia was baptized, and her household, so it is said that the jailor "was baptized, he and all his, straightway." Now it is evident, that in the baptizing of the two principal persons in this history, Lydia and the jailor, the same course was pursued by the Apostle as in all the other instances which have been considered. They first believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then they were baptized. But a new feature presents itself on both these occasions; that is, the baptizing of their households. And hence has been drawn a very common argument in favour of the baptizing of children; as it has been thought *probable* that children formed a part of these households. Beside these cases, there are only two other, in which the house or family is spoken of in the New Testament in connection with the head of the house,—the house of Crispus and the house of Stephanas; and though it is taking them out of their order, it may be well to notice them also here. Let us consider first the case of the jailor. It is said that "he was baptized, and all his,"—that is, "all his house;" to whom, as well as to himself, Paul and Silas had "spoken the word of the Lord." But if we are told that *they were baptized*, we are also told that *they believed*. In the 34th verse we read, that the jailor "rejoiced, believing in God with all his house." In order to force this case to support Infant-baptism, an attempt is sometimes made to change the construction of the sentence, *thus*; "He, believing in God, rejoiced with all his house." This makes very little difference in the meaning. For if his house were capable of rejoicing with him, they must have been of a sufficient age to understand *why* they rejoiced: and as his faith in Christ was the cause of *his* joy, it must have been also the cause of *theirs*; and if they could rejoice in *his* faith, why might they not have had faith *of their own* to rejoice in? But the Greek will not admit of the above construction. The adverb translated "with all his house" must be referred to the participle "believing," which in the Original follows it; and these words express the reason of his joy, which was, his own faith and the faith of his family. Beza gives *this* as the sense of the latter part of the 34th verse; "He," that is, the jailor, "rejoiced because that

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with the whole of his house he had believed in God.”<sup>[50]</sup> *As believers*, therefore,—of whomsoever his “house” consisted—they were entitled to baptism *on their own account*, and thus they stood precisely in the same situation with himself. And *no inference* can *hence* be drawn respecting Infant-baptism. Of Crispus, the chief ruler of the Synagogue at Corinth, mentioned in the xviii<sup>th</sup> Chapter, it is at once said that he “believed on the Lord with all his house;” and though their baptism is not particularly spoken of, it would of course take place with the baptism of the other believing Corinthians. From St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians we learn that he himself baptized Crispus;—no mention being made of his household: but as we are informed that they were *believers*, they would certainly be baptized, like the household of the Philippian jailor. This case, therefore, does not apply to the subject of Infant-baptism. Neither does the baptizing of the house of Stephanas. St. Paul tells the Corinthians, in the beginning of his First Epistle, that he baptized this house: but what does he say of them at the close of the Epistle? “Ye know,” he says, p. 51  
“the house of Stephanas, that it is *the first fruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints:*” (xvi. 15.)—a description this, of *personal religion*; and proving that they were *all* capable of meeting the requirements of baptism *in their own persons*. The only remaining case in which a household is said to have been baptized, is that of Lydia at Philippi. Now it seems evident from her history that she had no husband. The house is twice called *her house*; and *the household* is called *hers* also. And the invitation to Paul and his company is given *by herself and in her own name*. “Come into *my house*, and abide there.” (v. 15.) This language could never have been used of her and by her, if she had had a husband. Nor does it appear at all likely, that she was a widow with children; for, from the particularity with which her circumstances are related, there is every probability that, had this been the case, some intimation would have been given of it. We have not only *her name* mentioned, but *the place* she came from or still belonged to, and *the business* which she followed: but no allusion whatever to any family. She could not have been a person in a low condition of life, or she would not have been able to receive and entertain in her house for many days the Apostle and those who were with him. She would therefore have “household servants,” and probably persons to assist her in her business as “a seller of purple.” But the whole tenor of her history is against the supposition, p. 52  
that there were in her house *any who could not answer for themselves*. It appears, then, from the consideration of the cases in which the baptizing of households is mentioned in Scripture, that no argument whatever can be deduced from them on the subject of Infant-baptism. A reference to them, therefore, only gives an advantage to the opponents of the practice:—an argument which will not bear close examination being always worse than none.

The xviii<sup>th</sup> Chapter of this Book of The Acts of the Apostles contains the account of Crispus and his house just referred to. It is also simply, though very strikingly, said of many others of the Corinthians, that they “heard,”—they “believed,”—and they “were baptized.” (v. 8.) Faith came by hearing; and baptism, according to the institution of Christ, followed faith.

There only remains, in this Book of The Acts of the Apostles, another instance of baptism to be noticed; and this occurred at Ephesus. It is related in the beginning of the nineteenth Chapter. “Paul came to Ephesus, and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost.” We are reminded here of that passage in the Seventh Chapter of St. John, (v. 39.) where the Evangelist, referring to some words of the Lord Jesus, says, “This spake He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should”—that is, afterwards—“receive;”—adding, p. 53  
“for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because that Jesus was not yet glorified.” The literal translation of the latter part of this text is, “for the Holy Ghost was not yet:”—from which it would appear, that at that time there was no Holy Ghost; and therefore that the ignorance of His existence, of which the disciples at Ephesus seem to speak, was not so much to be wondered at. But the solution of the difficulty is probably the same in both cases. When St. John says, “For the Holy Ghost was not yet, because that Jesus was not yet glorified,” his meaning is made plain by the very proper introduction into our translation of the word “given;”—“for the Holy Ghost was not yet given.” This evidently refers to the extraordinary and abundant pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which was reserved until Jesus had ascended up on high, and (according to the prophecy in the lxviii<sup>th</sup> Psalm) had “received gifts for men;” and when He received them, He shed them forth, first upon His Apostles on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards upon multitudes of believers, generally by the laying on of their hands. But the disciples at Ephesus had not heard of these things. They had had no communication with any Christian Church or people; and thus, though they had been baptized with the baptism of John, as they tell the Apostle Paul in answer to his next question, “Unto what then were ye baptized?”—and *must* therefore have heard of the existence of the Holy Ghost, yet they had not heard of His having been given; and they express p. 54  
their ignorance in language very like to that which the Evangelist uses, when he is describing the period before the gift of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This seems a reasonable account of the matter. And if the same course had been pursued in the translation of both texts, the likeness between them would have been very evident. In the passage in St. John the explanatory word “given” is introduced. In the Chapter before us, not only is this or any such word omitted, but the word “any” is added,—“*any* Holy Ghost,” without a word in the Original to justify it. The literal rendering would be; “We have not even heard whether the Holy Ghost is.” Now if the word “given,” or “come,” were added, as in St. John, the two passages would exactly correspond:—“The Holy Ghost was not yet given:”—“We have not even heard whether the Holy Ghost is given.” These persons had probably not been long at Ephesus, but might have been (as Dr. Whitby suggests) “travelling into other parts of the world, where the gospel had not yet been planted.” But a question has arisen, whether what is said in the fifth verse relates to *them*, or whether it is not a continuation of St. Paul’s description of John’s baptism, begun in the verse

before. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." The objection to the application of this to the twelve disciples found at Ephesus is, that it involves a repetition of the Ordinance of baptism. But though John's baptism and the Christian Sacrament were administered *substantially* upon the same principles, there was a sufficient difference between them to warrant the baptizing again, in the name of the Sacred Trinity, of those who might already have partaken of John's baptism. The baptism of John was connected with an intermediate, or, at most, an introductory dispensation. It was, what the Apostle says of the tabernacle,—“for the time then present.” But after that Christ had appointed baptism “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost,” as the door of entrance into His Church for believers, there was no reason why such as had been baptized with John's baptism should not be admitted to Christ's Ordinance also, if occasion seemed to require it. And indeed St. Paul's question, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” seems to recognize a distinction of baptisms. But no argument whatever can be founded upon this case for the repetition of baptism *under the same Dispensation*. To suppose that the words in the 5th verse are a continuation of St. Paul's description of John's baptism, would be inconsistent with the natural course of the narrative; and to say that John “baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus,” would be to speak of his baptism as it is no where else spoken of. Beside, the persons on whom St. Paul laid his hands, as stated in the 6th verse, were the disciples found at Ephesus, and not the people in general who were baptized by John. So that it appears that what is said in the 5th verse relates to these disciples. Their knowledge was very limited; but they had the characteristic dispositions of disciples,—humility and teachableness; and thus, when they were farther instructed by St. Paul in the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ, they, no doubt with the greatest willingness, were baptized in His name. And then as in the case of Samaria, “when the Apostle had laid his hands upon them,” (but not before,) “the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with tongues and prophesied.”

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This is all that is said on the subject of baptism, as a Sacrament of the Christian Church, in the Scripture-history of The Acts of the Apostles.

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We come, then, to The Epistles.

The first passage we meet with on our subject is in the sixth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul, the writer of this Epistle, had been dwelling, in the former Chapters, upon the great gospel-doctrine of salvation by grace through faith. He had declared, that “a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law;” (iii. 28,) that in this way Abraham was justified; (iv. 3,) and that in this way every one else must be justified: (iv. 24,) and in the latter part of the fifth Chapter he had spoken strongly of God's grace much more abounding where man's sin abounded. The Apostle, then in the beginning of the sixth Chapter anticipates an abuse which might be made of this doctrine, and corrects it. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin,” in order “that grace may abound? God forbid!” Abhorred be the thought! And he proceeds to reason upon this; and to show, not only its *incongruity*, but (in a sense which other Scriptures allow) its *impossibility*.—“How shall *we* that *are dead* to sin, *live* any longer therein?” And then he brings in the subject of their baptism. “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” (v. 3, 4.) After what we have seen already of baptism, as administered by the Apostles and others, we can be at no loss to perceive the meaning of St. Paul's expression, “baptized into Christ.” According to His own command, all who believed in Him were baptized; and this act or Ordinance was their open avowal of faith in Him,—their public and palpable engrafting and incorporation into Him and His Church,—and their solemn dedication and consecration to the love, worship, and service of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. <sup>[57]</sup> Their baptism into Christ, consequent upon, and declarative of, their faith in Him, publicly and manifestly bound them unto Him;—to strict and spiritual conformity with Him. And thus the Apostle goes on to remind those who had been “baptized into Christ,”—for the Epistle was addressed to those at Rome who were “beloved of God and called to be saints,” and whose “faith was spoken of throughout the whole world,” (i. 7, 8,)—that they were “baptized into His death;” that is, into conformity to His death; that in virtue of His dying for their sins, and after the pattern of this His death, and by motives and considerations drawn from His death, they should die to all sin and be delivered from the reigning power of it. ‘The faithful,’ observes Beza on this expression, ‘are said to be baptized into the death of Christ, that through His death sin may die and be abolished in them.’ And to carry this conformity still farther, St. Paul adds, “Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death.” For as Christ's burial was a manifestation of the reality of His death, so ought it to be also with them respecting sin. It was likewise an introduction to, and preparation for, His glorious resurrection. And thus the Apostle proceeds with his exhortation;—“that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory (the glorious power) of the Father, even so we also (we who are baptized into Him) should walk in newness of life.” And in the following verses—indeed to the end of the Chapter—St. Paul presses the Roman Christians to devotedness to God's service, in language the most forcible which could have been made use of. Here then we see what baptism is, in the case of real believers: and it is of such alone that the Apostle here speaks. The obligations which result from it to righteousness and holiness are of the strongest possible description. And these obligations have their influence upon the faithful; though that influence is capable of a continued increase. How different is this from a service which is “outward” only “in the flesh!”

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The expressions, “buried with Christ by baptism” and “walking in newness of life” “after the

pattern of His resurrection," seem to imply, that the method of baptizing was by immersion, or plunging the whole body under water, from which it would come forth as by a kind of resurrection. That baptism *has been* thus administered, and *may be* thus administered, is freely admitted. But this is *no proof* that such was the unvarying method, and certainly *no precept* that it shall always be administered in this way. It may, however, with much reason be argued, that the expressions, "baptized into His death,"—"buried with Him,"—and "walking in newness of life" like unto His resurrection,—were not used by the Apostle with any reference to *the mode of administration*, but to *the events spoken of*; namely, Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. Christians are said to have been "circumcised in Christ," and to be "crucified with Him," without any outward corresponding actions. But if an argument for *immersion* may be drawn from this passage, an argument for *affusion*, or the pouring of water upon the person, may with greater force be drawn from the manner in which the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ Himself at His baptism, and upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost, and subsequently upon others who were baptized, and from the language used to describe it. When Peter preached to Cornelius, it is said, "The Holy Ghost *fell on* all them that heard the word:" and again, "On the Gentiles also *was poured out* the gift of the Holy Ghost." This is expressly called by St. Peter, their being "baptized with the Holy Ghost." (Acts xi. 15, 16.) An argument might also be drawn for the practice of *sprinkling*, not only from the striking similarity between baptism and the water of separation which was to be sprinkled upon the unclean, (Numb. xix. 19.,) but from the connection between the water of baptism and the blood of Christ, of which, as well as of the Holy Spirit, this water is an emblem, and which is called "the blood of sprinkling" from the method of its application to the heart. From all these things, and from the absence of any specific directions on the subject, it is reasonable to conclude, that baptism may be rightly administered in each of the *three* ways which have been mentioned. And it is too much like an undue magnifying of *the sign*, when it is attempted to make it in all respects answerable to the thing signified by it.

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This is the only passage *directly* relating to baptism in the Epistle to the Romans.

But there is a statement of the Apostle in the eleventh Chapter, which not only confirms what has been already said of the continuance of the Covenant with Abraham under the Christian Dispensation, but which also bears strongly upon the subject of the right of the children of believing parents to the token of the Covenant, together with their parents. The passage particularly referred to is the 24th verse of the eleventh Chapter. "For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree which is wild by nature, and wert grafted contrary to nature into a good olive-tree, how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into *their own olive-tree!*" The Apostle is here comparing the admission of the Gentiles into the Church of God, to the cutting off of branches from a wild olive and the grafting of them into a good olive; the good olive being the ancient church, planted, as it were, in the person of believing Abraham. 'In the view of St. Paul, the establishment of the Christian Church was no dissolution of the Jewish Church. It is the same Society still;—the same Body Corporate. Some of its rules and regulations, indeed, have been altered: a disfranchisement of many of its old members has taken place, and new ones have been admitted: but the same Church,—the same Chartered Company,—which existed *before the Law and under the Law*, exists to this present hour under the Gospel Dispensation. It is still Abraham's family. He is "the father of all them that believe." "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."<sup>[61]</sup> When, therefore, any of the Jews "abide not in unbelief," and are received into the Church of Christ, it is but "the grafting of the natural branches into *their own olive-tree.*" They are restored to the privileges which their fathers enjoyed, and are made members of the Church of God. But are their children to be left behind? Are they to be left out of the Covenant? And is this, might a converted Israelite justly ask,—Is this to be restored to our fathers' privileges? "Circumcision was not of the law, but of the fathers." *That* is taken away; and what have we in its place, if baptism, which is now the token of the covenant, be withheld from our children? If circumcision was our children's birthright before, how can they be deprived of it, and have nothing given them in the stead thereof, and yet the privileges possessed by our fathers not be lessened? This is *not* to be "grafted into *our own olive-tree!*"

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In the first Chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, St. Paul speaks of baptism; but as it is principally with a reference to himself, it is scarcely necessary to notice it in our present consideration,—except for the statement he is led to make of the great object of his mission; which was "*not* to baptize, but to preach the gospel:" the latter being the far more important and difficult work; necessary as it was that converts to Christ should be baptized. Divisions had arisen among the Corinthians: "one saying, I am of Paul,"—that is, I prefer Paul before all other Ministers, and others of them preferring others. This state of things caused the Apostle great distress, and he anxiously endeavours to correct it. He indignantly asks them, whether he (or any other Minister) had been "crucified for them," or whether they had been "baptized *in his name.*" This shows that baptism implies an entire dedication to him, in whose name it is administered. The Apostle then tells them, that he was very thankful it had been so ordered that he had baptized very few of them himself;—adding, as the cause of this, "for Christ sent me not to baptize,"—*that* might be done by others,—"*but*"—He sent me—"to preach the gospel." The Apostle here cannot intend to put any slight upon Christ's Ordinance of baptism, as is evident from what he has just said of it, "*Were ye baptized in the name of Paul?*"—but he intends to show, that it might be administered by persons of inferior station and gifts in the Church. And this is manifest from the very nature of the service.

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In the viith Chapter of this Epistle and the 14th verse there is a text, in which (as with respect to the children brought to Christ that He should touch them) baptism is not mentioned, and yet it

has so decided a bearing upon the subject, that we cannot but carefully notice it. St. Paul is speaking of the case of married persons, when one party believed, while the other believed not. This he says is not a sufficient reason for their separation: at least the separation should not be made by the one that believed. And to satisfy the mind of the believing "brother or sister" that the children did not suffer, he says,—*"For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by (or in) the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by (or in) the husband; else were your children unclean, but now are they holy."* It is with the latter part of this verse that we have to do. The Apostle here declares that children, which have one believing parent, are on equal terms or in the same condition with children, both of whose parents are believers; and thus they are said to be not *"unclean"* but *"holy."* Now, can there be a doubt, that the Apostle uses these epithets *"unclean"* and *"holy,"* in the same sense in which they were used in reference to the distinction between the Jews and the Gentiles? The latter were called *"unclean,"* because of their idolatries and other abominations; the former were called *"holy,"* because of their connection and Covenant with God. When the Apostle Peter was sent to preach the gospel to Cornelius, he applied this word *"unclean"* to all who were not Jews. *"Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company or come unto one of another nation; but God hath showed me that I should not call any man common or unclean."* And the people of Israel are repeatedly called *"holy to the Lord,"* because of the Lord's choice of them and Covenant with them. *"Thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God,"* was the language in which Moses addressed them. (Deut. vii. 6). And in this description their children were included: for God's Covenant with Israel embraced them also; and thus every man-child, when eight days old, was to receive circumcision, which was the token of the Covenant. From these things we may learn the meaning of the Apostle in the passage under consideration. The *uncleanness* of the Gentiles was a barrier against their participating in the Ordinances of the Jewish Church. The *holiness* of Israel was their title to those Ordinances; and this too in the case of their children. Surely, then, when the Apostle says to believing Christian parents, *"Your children are holy,"* he must mean that they are entitled to the Ordinances of the Church of Christ! It seems impossible, if St. Paul's language has any meaning, to avoid *this* conclusion,—that *the children of the faithful, as soon as they are born, have a Covenant-holiness, and so a right and title to baptism, which is now the token of the Covenant.* Their holiness, that is, their being in covenant with God, does not date from their *baptism*, but from their *birth*.<sup>[65]</sup> To every believing parent God may be supposed to say, as He said to Abraham, *"I will establish my Covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee."* Much profit ariseth from this connection, if it be made a right use of. Baptism, like circumcision, verily profiteth, if the baptized child keep the law—the requisition which God makes of faith and obedience; but if he be a breaker of the law, his baptism is made no baptism at all; as circumcision was in such a case made uncircumcision. (See Rom. ii. 25.) And let it be farther observed from this text, that it is of *real believers* and their children that the Apostle speaks when he says,—*"Now are your children holy."* Hence it appears, that the faith of the parents is the foundation of any children's claim to baptism. *"Unclean"* is the description which is given of all others.

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The only other passage in this Epistle in which baptism is referred to, as a Christian Sacrament, is the 13th verse of the xiith Chapter:—*"For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit."* St. Paul may here allude to baptism in the former part of the verse, and to the cup in the Lord's Supper in the latter part of it. But whatever he may *allude to*, what he *asserts* is this;—that it was the baptism of the Holy Spirit which made them real members of Christ's mystical body. The baptism of water was the sign of this; but the sign would have profited them little, if they had not received also the thing signified. The same may be said of the cup in the Lord's Supper. It is for the nourishment of those who are real members of the Church of Christ by the baptism of the Spirit: in fact, it cannot possibly nourish any other. The essential unity of all baptized believers, and yet the diversity of Offices and gifts belonging to the several constituent parts or members of Christ's Church, seems to be what the Apostle is here inculcating upon the Corinthians; and this with the special design to show them the inconsistency and the evil of their emulations and divisions. He aimed at curing them of their unseemly strife, by reminding them that one and the same Holy Spirit had made them all *"members of one body,"* but had set those members in their several and suitable places; so that each should be content with the place assigned him; and without aspiring to something which had not been given him, or envying those who might be in a higher or a supposed more honourable state, should use what he had for the common good,—for the strengthening and well-being of the whole: *"that there should be,"* as he says in the 25th verse, *"no schism in the body, but that the members should have the same care one for another."*

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The Epistle to the Galatians furnishes us with the next passage in our important inquiry. It is at the close of the iird Chapter, the 26th and two following verses:—*"For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free; there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus."* Here a new idea is introduced;—a fresh practical use is made by the Apostle of the Ordinance of baptism. And a very striking and beautiful idea it is. The order hitherto invariably found to prevail in what the Scripture says on the subject of baptism is observable also here. The Apostle first reminds the Galatians that *they were made the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus*, and then he refers to their baptism and what they had done by it. As we have considered the expressions, *"baptized into Christ,"* as they occur in the Epistle to the Romans, they need not be noticed here. But the words, *"have put on Christ,"* represent to us—what in connection with our subject we have not had before—the clothing or

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garments which baptized believers have put on, and in which they appear (when things are as they ought to be with them) both before God and before men. This phrase is said to have been taken from the method of dipping or plunging adults in baptism; who, when they came forth from the water, were clothed with their own garments as though they had been new, or with other garments really new. There are two senses in which true believers may be said to “put on Christ.” First, they put Him on as their righteousness for acceptance with God or for their justification; and, secondly, they put Him on—(and this seems especially intended here)—for sanctification; that is, His Spirit is imparted to them, by which they are so changed as to become new creatures. The graces of Christ’s Spirit are sometimes thus described under the figure of clothing. “Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved,” writes St. Paul to the Colossians, “bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering.” “And above all these things, put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.” (iii. 12, 14.) The Spirit of Christ ought to be as apparent in those who have been baptized into Him as the garments which they wear. Nay, His meekness, and lowliness, and gentleness, and goodness, and heavenly-mindedness, should become *a part of themselves—their very nature*. For as the work of sanctification, expressed by the being clothed upon with ‘Christ, is both *internal* and *outward*, it may be compared to *the natural beauty* with which Christ Himself said that God clothes the plants and the flowers: and when Christians manifest the genuine influence of the Spirit of Christ, it may then indeed be said of them, as He said of the lilies, “that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.” The words in the 28th verse, “There is neither male nor female,”—connected with what follows, “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed,”—clearly show that circumcision was superseded, and that baptism now supplied its place.

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Upon St. Paul’s declaration in the ivth Chapter of his Epistle to the Ephesians, “One baptism,” it is perhaps only necessary to remark, that it again follows faith;—“One faith,”—the same doctrine of salvation once for all delivered to the saints and to be received by faith,—and then, “One baptism” with water, by which that faith is professed, and in which believers are by One Spirit baptized into One body, and dedicated to the service of the One living and true God. It is One and the same Ordinance for all,—for Jews and Gentiles; and once administered, not to be repeated. The practical purpose for which this, with the other Unities, was mentioned by the Apostle, was to enforce the same lesson as that given to the Corinthians,—that Christians should “endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (v. 3.)

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In the vth Chapter of this Epistle there appears another allusion to baptism, when the Apostle says, that “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.” (v. 26.) It is not necessary to the sense and force of this verse to suppose that baptism is referred to in it; for the word of God has a cleansing and sanctifying power, when applied by His Spirit. “Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth;” was Christ’s prayer for His disciples to His heavenly Father. And He also said unto them, “Now ye are clean *through the word* which I have spoken unto you.” And as it is a continuous and progressive work, which the Apostle is here speaking of, and not any one particular act,—for the use of God’s “*word*” in the work of sanctification is continually repeated,—it seems much more natural to understand the expressions, “with the washing of water by” or in “the word,” as referring to the figure of water, and its purifying properties in general, rather than to a single instance of its application. But there can be no objection to refer these expressions to baptism, as being an Ordinance which is supposed to be kept always in remembrance, and to have a constant bearing upon the believer’s life and conduct. Let us take it here, and every where else, in connection with the context, and we shall find that it represents—not an imaginary, but a real—not a temporary, but an abiding—influence upon the soul;—issuing in its final salvation. Who is this that is said to be washed with water by the word? The mixed multitude of professors of Christ’s religion? No:—but “*the Church*,”—the blessed Company of all faithful people—“the Bride—the Lambs wife.” And what is the effect ascribed to the washing? Her cleansing and sanctification. But as the Church is composed of individuals, every individual member thereof is “sanctified, and cleansed with the washing of water by the word,” and so is made meet to be presented by Christ to Himself at the last in perfect beauty. Let these things attend and crown the use of the Ordinances, and men may magnify them—as Paul did his Office—as much as they please.

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The next place in Scripture in which baptism is spoken of, is in the iind Chapter of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Colossians. At the 11th verse he begins the subject. “In whom also,” that is, in Christ, “ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised Him from the dead.” The Apostle’s object here is to show, that the Christian’s completeness in Christ (asserted in the former verse) is not affected by the want of circumcision; for that true believers have that which was represented by circumcision, only under another form and name. By “the circumcision made without hands,” the circumcision of the heart is evidently intended. By “the circumcision of Christ” is probably *not* meant the circumcision which Christ Himself was subjected to, but the circumcision with which Christ circumcises. This would therefore refer to the Christian Sacrament of baptism, wherever rightly received. This is the corresponding type with, as well as antitype of, circumcision; because, like circumcision, it represents and seals the blessings of the Covenant to believers. The latter part of this passage is so like the one already considered in the vith chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, that it need not be dwelt upon. The death, burial and resurrection of Christ are not only signs and patterns of what *should take place* with respect to Christians, but they are effectual causes thereof in the case of all who are spiritually joined to Him; and the whole is, as it were, *consolidated in baptism*. The faith which

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goes before, and which is exercised in the Ordinance, and the fruits which follow after, are all summed up in and referred to this Sacrament: and well and happy it is, whenever this is truly the case.

Two texts more remain to be considered in relation to our subject. The first is found in that passage in the iiiird Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, from the 4th to the 7th verse. "But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour; that being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The word here translated "washing" signifies also a *laver*, or vessel for washing: but the translation is undoubtedly correct, and *ablution* or *the act of washing*, is intended. This word only occurs here and in Ephes. v. 26., which we have already considered; where it must be translated (as it is) "*washing*:"—"the washing of water by the word." That regeneration washes or cleanses the soul from the filthiness of sin, is all that can be proved by this passage. The washing is by the regeneration, and not the regeneration by the washing. There *may be* an allusion to the Christian Sacrament of baptism; but it is not at all necessary to the understanding of the Apostle's words. *St. Paul is here describing what God does when He saves any.* He sheds on them abundantly the Holy Ghost through Jesus Christ the Saviour, and this Holy Ghost regenerates, and washes and renews; and, in connection with this, God justifies the subjects of this change by His grace, and so makes them heirs according to the hope of eternal life. The regeneration and the renewal are not two distinct things; but the latter is the declaration of the former;—the transforming of the soul into the divine image, consequent upon and in necessary connection with its regeneration. But does this text prove, that all who are washed by the water of baptism partake of regeneration? Then it also proves, that all baptized persons are saved, and that they are renewed by the Holy Ghost, and that the Holy Ghost is shed on them abundantly, and that they are justified by God's grace, and that they are heirs of eternal life! It is impossible, without doing violence to God's word, to rend the blessings, here spoken of, asunder. They are links in one and the same golden chain, both the ends of which are in Heaven;—beginning with "the love of God" and terminating with "eternal life." And are these things true in the case of *all who are baptized*? If this were taught in the Scripture, what then might the infidel say of it? He might then say, that Scripture and matter of fact directly contradict each other. Or it would follow, that regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost and justification and salvation, are terms which mean nothing, because the things they profess to represent have no practical influence upon the lives of men! We must, then, take the passage altogether, or not touch it at all. We must not choose a word or two out of it,—caught by the sound,—and affix a meaning to them, which is inconsistent with the context and other plain portions of revealed truth. If baptism be the washing here spoken of, it is accompanied with regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, shed on the baptized abundantly; and this cannot be without the exhibition of the fruits of the Spirit in the life and conduct. And if this be Christian baptism, where these things are not, Christian baptism is not. And this is incontestably established by the testimony of St. Peter, in the text about to be noticed. Let it only be farther observed, in connection with this passage in St. Paul's Epistle to Titus, that a no mean authority in the interpretation of Scripture (Mr. Joseph Mede) thinks, that the Apostle here alludes to the cleansing of the new-born infant from the pollutions which attend its birth: and he refers to the description given in the beginning of the xvith Chapter of the Book of the prophet Ezekiel in confirmation of this:—"Neither wast thou washed in water." (v. 4.) Here, then, *life* is first found, and then there is *the washing* for purification.

The text, already referred to, in St. Peter, is the 21st verse of the iiiird Chapter of his First Epistle. This perfects the proof of the view hitherto taken of the Christian Sacrament of baptism; and is a *key* which would unlock any difficulty which other portions of Scripture might present;—if indeed such assistance were needed. St. Peter is speaking of the days of Noah, and he says, that "the long-suffering of God then waited, while the ark was preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water;" and then he adds, "The like figure whereunto,"—the corresponding type with it, and the antitype of it—(as was observed before respecting circumcision) "even baptism, doth now save us,"—but before he completes the sentence, he breaks off to tell us what this baptism, of which he speaks, is, "*not* the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God," and then he finishes what he had begun to say,—"*by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*" Now if the two things here spoken of in relation to baptism were always found together, the words of St. Peter would be without meaning; for none, possessing them both, could be so blind as to imagine that it is the outward washing which saves them, and not "the answer of a good conscience;" though *it is possible* (as experience shows) that men might be satisfied with the outward sign, and look no farther, as the Jews had done in the case of circumcision. The Holy Spirit, therefore, by the pen of St. Peter warns against this error, and assures us, that the baptism which is unto salvation consists of, not only, nor chiefly, the application of water to the body, but "the answer of a good conscience toward God." It is thought by some, that a *reference* is here made to the custom of putting questions to those who were about to be baptized as to their faith and repentance: and something of this kind had passed between Philip and the Eunuch, when Philip told him that "if he believed with all his heart he might be baptized, and the Eunuch answered, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." In every such case there doubtless is *the baptism*—because there has been *the birth*—of the Spirit. But though St. Peter's words *may be* applicable to such a custom, if it prevailed in his time, yet, as Archbishop Leighton says in his Commentary on this text, "This questioning and answering farther expresses the inward questioning and answering which is

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transacted betwixt the soul and itself, and the soul of God. The word, 'is *judicial*, and means the interrogation used in law for the trial and executing of processes: and this is the great business of conscience, to hold courts in the soul; and it is of continual necessity that it be so. This "answer of a good conscience unto God" (as likewise its questioning to enable itself for that answer) is touching great points that are of chief concern to the soul, its justification and sanctification; for baptism is the seal of *both*, and purges the conscience in both respects. Now, the conscience of a real believer inquiring within, upon right discovery, will make this answer unto God;—"Lord, I have found that there is no standing before Thee, for the soul in itself is overwhelmed with a world of guiltiness; but I find a blood sprinkled upon it, that hath, I am sure, virtue enough to purge it all away, and to present it pure unto Thee." And this the Lord does agree to, and authorizes the conscience, on this account, to return back an answer of peace and safety to the soul. So for the other: "Lord, I find a living work of holiness on this soul. Though there is yet corruption there, it is as a continual grief and vexation: and if I cannot say much of high degrees of grace, yet I may say, there is the beginning of them;—at least this I most confidently affirm, that there are real and earnest desires in the soul after these things. It would know and conform to Thy will, and it would gladly walk *in all well-pleasing* unto Thee." Now He that sees the truth of these things, owns it as His own work, and engages to advance it and bring it to perfection.'

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Such is the intercourse which the purified conscience hath with God; and wherever this is, there is the "baptism" which is unto salvation.

In the examination which has thus been made into the Scripture-testimony concerning the Christian Sacrament of Baptism, no text has been—at least intentionally—overlooked, from which any additional information could be obtained on the subject.

From the passages which have been considered, the following conclusions may be taken as the Summary of the whole:—

1. That baptism with water has been appointed by Christ as the door of entrance into His Visible Church, and is the token of the Covenant of grace under the Christian Dispensation, in the place of circumcision, which was the token of this Covenant upon its formal establishment with Abraham. To be baptized with water, therefore, is necessary to constitute any one a member of the Visible Church of Christ or Kingdom of God upon earth.

2. That since *faith* hath from the beginning been appointed by God, as the instrument or means by which men are admitted into Covenant with Him, it was the command of the Lord Jesus Christ that baptism, which is now the token of the Covenant, should be administered only to *believers*. It was the same with respect to circumcision. Abraham believed God: and, as a believer, he was circumcised. And true believers only are acknowledged by Christ as rightful members of His Church. Yet as Abraham's children were admitted to circumcision together with himself, it is hence inferred, that the children of believers in Christ should be baptized, as well as their parents: no prohibition of their admission to the Ordinance having been given. This conclusion is confirmed by Christ's kind reception of the children that were brought to Him—by the application of Old Testament promises after Christ's resurrection—by the declared continuance of the root and fatness of the Olive-tree planted at first in Abraham—and by the description given of the children of even one believing parent, namely, that they are holy; that is, such as ought to be presented to the Lord. Still, no direction to administer baptism to children has been found, nor is any instance of it recorded.

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3. That although Christ, the Head of the Church, sows only good seed in His field, His enemy has succeeded in sowing tares among the wheat; and thus it comes to pass, that evil men are in the Visible Church mingled with the good. Hence we learn, that neither baptism nor any outward Ordinances are *necessarily* attended with spiritual blessings. "All were not Israel, who were of Israel." "He was not a Jew, who was one outwardly; neither was that circumcision, which was outward in the flesh." And we have seen that the "baptism" which "saves," is "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." Simon Magus, though baptized, was not sound in heart from the beginning. And if during the life-time of the Apostles, and when persons were baptized upon their own profession, men thus found admission into the Church, who "had the form of godliness, but denied its power,"—no wonder that in later times, and since baptism has been administered almost exclusively to infants, the case should have been the same. For we have met with no promise that God will give His grace to any particular persons, except in connection with the state of mind and the character which He prescribes. In no place of Scripture has God bound the first communication of His grace to any Ordinance, time, or circumstance whatsoever:—and for this simple, but sufficient reason, that if He had done so, it would have been an abdication of His authority; His sovereignty would have ceased; and man would have become—what in truth he wishes to be—the virtual ruler in God's Kingdom. God no where promised to circumcise the hearts of all the children of the Israelites, although He commanded them to be circumcised in the flesh. And with respect to the baptism of children, how can *any thing absolute and unconditional* be predicated concerning it, since no command or direction was given for it? The administration of baptism to infants is certainly most agreeable with the spirit of Christ and of His Dispensation, and it is but a continuance of what was begun in the family of Abraham. But resting, as it does, upon inference and analogy, it is not possible to assign any specific spiritual influence with absolute certainty to it.

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4. That with respect to the advantages and uses of baptism,—besides its being appointed by

Christ as the door of admission into His Visible Church, and the practical purposes to which it is applied in the course of the Christian's conduct and experience,—very little particular instruction is given in Scripture. To the corresponding rite of circumcision, therefore, we chiefly look for direction here.

It may be said, then, of baptism, as of circumcision,

(1.) That it is a *sign* of spiritual blessings. Of Abraham we are told, that he “received *the sign* of circumcision.” (Rom. iv. 11.) This Ordinance *represented* “the putting off of the body of the flesh.” Baptism with water also *signifies* the washing of the soul from sin;—both from the guilt of it by forgiveness and from the pollution of it. When Saul of Tarsus was bidden to “be baptized, and wash away his sins,” this twofold purification was visibly represented. And so it is in all cases. “The putting away of the filth of the flesh” by the application of “pure water” to the body, does in a very simple and intelligible, yet striking and significant manner, represent the purging of the conscience by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, and the cleansing of the heart from its filthiness and idols by God's Holy Spirit. It symbolizes both pardon and purity:—especially the latter;—the soul's death unto sin and its new birth unto righteousness.

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(2.) Like circumcision, baptism is also a *seal*. “Abraham” (as we also read in Rom. iv. 11,) “received circumcision, a *seal* of the righteousness of the faith, which he had yet being uncircumcised.” A seal ratifies a Deed, and is a token and pledge that the engagements of it will be fulfilled by all the contracting parties. When Abraham submitted to circumcision, he ratified or confirmed his former faith in God and obedience to Him; and God, by the same pledge, assured Abraham of his justification—of his adoption into His family—and that he should finally inherit a better country, that is, Heaven.

Baptism, in like manner, is a *seal* on the part of those who receive it rightly, that they believe in God through Christ, and regard themselves as bound to forsake all sin, and to serve Him unto their lives' end: and God thereby visibly assures them of the remission of their sins and of their adoption as His children, and that, as He gives them grace, so He will give them glory. And if this visible seal of the Covenant had not been serviceable, the wise and gracious God would never, either in the case of circumcision or baptism, have caused it to be affixed unto it.

(3.) Circumcision had *this* “profit” also connected with it,—that the different means of grace, which God from time to time appointed, followed in its train. St. Paul, having distinctly declared at the end of the iind Chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, that the circumcision of the flesh and of the heart did not necessarily accompany each other, supposes some, who were “Jews outwardly,” to exclaim,—If this be so,—if the inward grace does not always attend the outward sign,—and that the want of the inward grace puts us circumcised Jews on the same level spiritually with uncircumcised Gentiles, then, “What advantage hath the Jew? Or what profit is thereof circumcision?” (iii. 1.) *Is the same question asked respecting baptism, when a like separation is made between the water and the Holy Spirit?* The Apostle's answer shall suffice for both:—“Much every way; chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.” It is here evident, that God regards the possession of a Revelation from Heaven as highly advantageous, considered in itself; so that for the neglect or misuse of it men are deeply responsible. In the beginning of the ixth Chapter, St. Paul again takes up the subject, and enumerates several other “advantages” as belonging to the Jews;—“the adoption, and the glory, and the Covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises, and the fathers, and that Christ, as concerning His human nature, was born a Jew;”—and though the circumcision of the heart together with that of the flesh is not found among these, yet the Apostle maintains, that the possession of them did set the Israelites, in point of religious privileges, far above all the other nations of the earth. And it is the same with those who are admitted into Christ's Church by baptism. Having free access to the word of God and instruction in its sacred truths—the enjoyment of His Sabbaths and Service—having His promises and threatenings, and the experience of their fulfilment in time past, together with the examples of faith and godliness and the blessed effects of them in such as have gone before—all these are so many means of improvement, as will leave speechless at the last those who had them and did not profit by them. While all who use them aright, and sincerely seek to derive benefit from them, find to their exceeding great comfort, that God hath “not said to the seed of Jacob, Seek ye me in vain.” It was no small advantage to Abraham's family to be “commanded by him to keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment:” (Gen. xviii. 19,) and that children should be “brought up” by Christian parents “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,” and be taught what was done for them at their baptism, united too with earnest prayers on their behalf,—is a privilege, for which many will to all eternity have cause to bless Him, who gave them so “goodly a heritage.” (Ps. xvi. 6.)

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Lastly. We would refer again, concerning the advantages and uses of baptism, to that *practical application of it* which we have seen may be made throughout the whole course of the Christian's life upon earth. He is to remember, that he was “baptized into the death of Christ and buried with Him,” that so he may die unto sin, and have, as much as possible, done with it. “Risen with Christ in baptism,” his “affections should be set on things above,” and he should “walk in newness of life.” “Baptized into one body,” strife and divisions should not be seen among Christians, and “the unity of the spirit should be kept in the bond of peace.” “Baptized into Christ, and having put on Christ,” they should appear in the beautiful clothing of His mind and Spirit. They should seek and pray daily to be more and more “sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word,” that they may be “prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Thus baptism, if used as the Scripture uses it, would be of great practical influence. And when

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this is the case, it may be productive of much comfort; for, like the bow in the cloud, it is a token of God's Covenant to save and not destroy. The water of baptism, in the case of every true believer, "is as the waters of Noah unto the Lord: for as He hath sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth," so in this Sacrament He hath, as it were, added His oath to His word of promise, that "he that believeth and is baptized *shall he saved.*" (Is. liv. 9. Mark xvi 16.)

## APPENDIX.

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### *Note (A.) page 27.*

WHEN God said to Abraham, (Gen. xvii. 7.) "I will establish my Covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee, in their generations for an everlasting Covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee," His meaning was, that as He was the God of *believing Abraham*, so He would be the God of all Abraham's *believing children and descendants*. And when He farther promised to "give unto Abraham and to his seed after him, the land in which he was a stranger, even all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession," the same limitation as to "his seed" was also intended. That these, and these only, are the "seed" referred to, is as clear as the declarations of Holy Scripture can make it. In the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians this matter is placed beyond a doubt. The "seed" must partake of *the character of the father*, and then the promises were theirs, as well as his. In the ivth Chapter of the Epistle to the Romans and the 12th verse, the Apostle, speaking of Abraham, says, that he was to be "the father of circumcision to them *who are not of the circumcision only*, (that is, who are not only circumcised in the flesh) *but also walk in the steps of that faith of Abraham, which he had yet being uncircumcised.*" Could any thing be plainer than this? St. Paul is here speaking of the circumcised Jews, (he had spoken of the uncircumcised Gentiles in the former verse, the 11th,) and he says distinctly, that Abraham was a father to those circumcised ones who should "walk in the steps of his faith." So that the following is evidently the Apostle's meaning in the 11th and 12th verses: 'Both Jew and Gentile may see, in God's dealings with Abraham, an exhibition of the plan in which each is to seek the imputation of righteousness. Let the uncircumcised believe in God, as Abraham, when yet uncircumcised, believed in God; and his faith shall be counted to him for righteousness, as Abraham's was. Let the Jews, too, learn from the case before them, that though, like circumcised Abraham, they bear in their bodies the seal of the Covenant, yet *the sign of circumcision alone will not ensure the blessing signified, unless at the same time they are found resembling Abraham in the exercise of that faith, in consequence of which the seal was fixed upon him.*'<sup>[88]</sup> These, then,—*believers*,—are the "seed" of Abraham, with whom the Covenant was made, and to whom the promises were given. And this is confirmed by what follows. In the next verse the Apostle goes on to say; "For the promise that he should be the heir of the world,"—(which is the inspired exposition of the other part or promise of God's Covenant with Abraham; "And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, for an everlasting possession;")—"For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham or *to his seed* through the law, but *through the righteousness of faith:*" and again, in the 16th verse; "Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end *the promise might be sure to all the seed;* not to that only which is of the law, (believing circumcised Jews) but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, (believing uncircumcised Gentiles) who is *the father of us all,*"—that is, of all believers, whether circumcised or not,—"before Him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead." "The promise," then, "that he should be the heir of the world" (evidently meaning the better world, that is, the heavenly,) "was to Abraham and *to his seed through the righteousness of faith.*" Not to his *unbelieving descendants*, but to those only who were partakers of his faith;—to all of whom, the promise was and still is "*sure.*" We pass over the ixth Chapter of this Epistle, though it is full of evidence to the same effect; and proceed to the Epistle to the Galatians; where we shall find the description of Abraham's "seed" given in language, if possible, still plainer and stronger. In the iird Chapter and the 6th verse the Apostle begins the subject: "Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye, therefore, that *they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*" "So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." And then in the 14th verse, the Apostle tells us more of this blessing of Abraham: "That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." "The promise of the Spirit" is here said to be "received through faith;"—that is, by them that believe. But in the 16th verse, the account given of the "seed" of Abraham is as distinct and decisive as words can make it. Referring to the Covenant made by God with Abraham, (contained in Gen. xvii.) St. Paul says, "Now to Abraham *and his seed* were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to *thy seed which is Christ.*" By "Christ" here (it is scarcely necessary to remark) is not meant Christ *personal*, but Christ *mystical*;—His mystical Body, consisting of Christ himself, the Head, and true believers, both Jews and Gentiles, "all one in Him." (v. 28.) The same expression is used in 1 Cor. xii. 12: "For as the body (the natural body) is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body; *so also is Christ.*" Believers in Christ, then, who compose His mystical Body, are *the seed of Abraham*, to whom with himself,—*"the father of all them that believe,"*—the promises of the Covenant were made. And, intent upon enforcing this truth, and leaving no possibility of mistaking his meaning, the Apostle concludes the subject with

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these words; (v. 29.) "And if ye be Christ's," (by believing in Him and by being baptized by One Spirit into his One Body) "*then* are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." A clearer and a fuller description of *the persons*, to whom the promises of the Covenant were made, could not possibly have been given! God did not promise to be a God, and to give the inheritance of which Canaan was a type, *to all* the natural descendants of Abraham, though they were all to be circumcised; but *to those only who should "walk in the steps of his faith."* For this *limitation* of the meaning of the "*seed*" of Abraham does no more violence to the text, than the *extension* of the meaning of "Canaan" to the heavenly world. But there is (as we have seen) *inspired authority* for both interpretations. *These*, then, were the "*seed*," to whom the promises were made. And it is the same still. The children of professing believers are baptized; but the outward form of baptism does not secure to them the blessings thereby sealed to the believer, unless they also have a true and lively faith. *Then* the promises are theirs. The Scripture warrants us to go thus far, but no farther. And when man attempts to put benefits into Ordinances, which God has not revealed to him, he makes himself wise "above that which is written;" and thus does in effect what the Jews did,—and for which they were so justly reprov'd by the Lord Jesus Himself;—he "teaches for doctrines the commandments of men." (Matt. xv. 9.)

### **Note (B.) page 50.**

It is expressly said in the 32nd verse, that Paul and Silas "spake the word of the Lord to *all that were in the jailor's house.*" This was *before* they were baptized. All that were in his house were capable therefore of instruction; and thus their "faith came by hearing." And to show more decidedly the existence of faith in *the family*, not only is *the fact* itself stated, but also *the fruit* which it produced: namely, its adding to the jailor's joy. He rejoiced—of course *the more*—because that *his house believed*, as well as himself.

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### **Note (C.) page 57.**

The baptism of a believer is like the coronation of a lawful Sovereign. The latter at his coronation publicly enters upon his Office. He is then anointed, and invested with the robes and other ensigns of royalty. The crown is then solemnly put upon his head—the sceptre into his hand—and he swears in the presence of the nobles and chief of the people to rule according to law: and any subsequent dereliction of duty would be called *a breaking of his coronation-oath*. But he was *in reality* king before his coronation. Thus when a man repents, he forsakes sin; (and what is the forsaking of it but the dying to it?) and when he believes, he is born of God; (and what is this but his spiritual resurrection?) and this repentance and this faith are both required of every one *before, and in order to, his baptism*. But at his baptism he is publicly invested with his privileges as a Christian, and he then solemnly swears to live according to Christ's laws for the future. And thus every departure from duty may well be called *a violation of his baptismal engagements*. But *in reality* his death unto sin and his new birth unto righteousness commenced when he repented and believed; that is, at a period prior to (and under some circumstances the interval of time might be very considerable) his baptism. His claim to baptism is founded upon his having already renounced sin and being possessed of a lively faith;—as a claim to be crowned is founded upon this, that the person who makes it is the rightful sovereign already. In both cases, there is *the confirmation* of the relationship with all its rights and duties, but not *the commencement* of it. *This* had taken place *before*.

L. SEELEY,  
PRINTER,  
THAMES DITTON.

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## **FOOTNOTES.**

[20] See Plain Tracts for Critical Times, by a Union of Clergymen. And on this text generally.

[27] With reference to the "seed" of Abraham, see Note A. in Appendix.

[50] See Note (B.)

[57] See Note (C.)

[61] Lectures on The Epistle to the Romans. By the Rev. John Fry, A.B., &c.

[65] See the connection between *the Covenant-holiness* of children and *their being presented to the Lord*, more distinctly shown in the case of the first-born of Israel. (Exod. xiii. 2, compared with Luke ii. 22, 23.)

[88] Lectures on The Epistle to the Romans, by the Rev. John Fry, A.B., &c.

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