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# S E R M O N

ON THE

## BAPTISM OF JOHN,

SHEWING IT TO BE A

### PECULIAR DISPENSATION,

AND

### NO EXAMPLE FOR CHRISTIANS.

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"The Law and the Prophets were until John." Luke xvi. 16.

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## A C T S XIX. 5.

*When they heard this, they were baptized in the name  
of the Lord Jesus.*



**I**T has ever been the artifice of Satan, to turn off mens thoughts from practical religion and vital piety, and to fix them on forms or doctrines of less importance. He assumes the garb of an angel of light, and insinuates that certain things contain the substance of religion, which, perhaps, enter but little into its nature. He often so bewitches the attention, that some, while they pay the anise, mint and cummin, the weightier matters of the law are forgotten or neglected. To such temptations, the heart yields without much reluctance. In its unregenerate state, it fixes on any thing rather than on true religion. Forms and ceremonies, expense and mortification, are submitted to in preference to the love of God and man. Something visible is looked for, which may strike the senses rather than affect the heart.

Among other forms engrafted on religion by its founder, which have divided the practice, and, but too often, alienated the affections of his disciples, is the ordinance of baptism. Jarring sentiments on this subject, once disturbed the repose of states and cities. At present they often disturb the tranquility of Christian Churches; and in seasons of revival, they uniformly hinder the work and bring it to an untimely close. Since this is certainly the case, and since we are well assured that true religion does not consist in forms and ordinances, it becomes us to discuss with unaffected candor, and differ with christian forbearance and affection. In the following enquiry concerning baptism, the writer proposes to maintain a candid spirit; being not more anxious to promote conviction, than to advance a christian temper.

In our researches concerning the proper mode and subjects of baptism, it is our business to discover as distinctly as possible, the sentiments, the directions, and the practice of Jesus Christ himself, or his immediate disciples. To decide this point, the baptism which was practised by John, is often alluded to as a guide. Waving the dispute concerning the mode John practised, it may be worth our while to examine, into the design and circumstances of his baptism. Perhaps, we shall be able to discover such a remarkable difference, between the forerunner John, and Christ the Lord, as to assure us, that whatever John did in this matter, was never designed as an example to the disciples of Christ. To set this difference in its proper light, is the object of this discourse. The current opinion among those who think but slightly on this subject, will favor the belief that John's baptism was one and the same with that of Christ. It is called by the same name, is spoken of in the same records, and was submitted to by Jesus Christ, and therefore without much consideration it is alluded to as an example for Christians. But when we fully reflect on the following circumstances—the use of baptism among the Jews before the time of John—the nature of John's character and mission—that John practised baptism without the command of Christ—that John's baptism was submitted to by Christ—that in its very nature his baptism was different from that of Christ—that John ceased when Jesus began to act—that in John's baptism there is no mention of the Holy Ghost—and that John's disciples were actually rebaptized by the Apostles. When we attentively reflect on these things, we then perceive that the baptism of John was as different from Christian baptism as the character of John was from that of Christ.

1. Let us consider that the rite of baptism was in use among the Jews before the time of John. *If so*, what he did, unless he received the command of Christ, may no more be an example, than that which was used long before by the Patriarchs\* and Prophets of the

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\* At a very early period, religious washings were in use. A very learned critic offers an opinion, that Jacob practised them in his family. When Jacob commanded "Be clean and change your garments," Gen. xxxv. 2. he supposes that

Jewish Church. That it was observed by the Jews as an ordinance of religion is certain. Their writers inform us, that their nation was admitted into covenant with God by baptism, as well as by other types. I shall on this subject make a few quotations from Maimonides, who stands confessedly among the best interpreters of the Jewish law. "By three things," says he, "was Israel admitted into covenant, by circumcision, by baptism, and by sacrifice." [Maim. Exod. xix. 10.] The same writer, when speaking of the admission of Gentile converts into the Jewish Church, informs us "that none were esteemed proselytes until they were circumcised and baptized." I shall make only one more quotation of many that might be added. "Following the doctrine of the Sanhedrim, they baptize a child, and if he is destitute of parents, he is presented by three persons who represent his father." From all which it appears, that this was a practice common among the Jews, and that those who were authorized to practise it, used it constantly when they proselyted the Heathen nations. From this circumstance, we are not surprised at seeing John baptize, when, as the forerunner of Jesus, he began to prepare his way. They therefore who were sent to John, [John i. 25—33.] did not enquire, why he used bap-

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he meant. "Wash you with water and change your garments." This was certainly a religious preparation; because it is added, "let us go up to Bethel, and I will make there an altar unto God." A conjecture might be hazarded, that the flood gave the first idea of baptism, and that Noah was instructed to look on this as a type of the blood of Christ, and that he handed it down to his posterity. The apostle Peter confirms this idea, assuring us that the flood was a figure of Christ's blood. "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." These religious washings seem not to have been confined to the Jews. There are evident traces of them to be seen among the Heathen, by whom it was no doubt borrowed from the Jews. The ancient fathers, Justin, Clement, and Tertullian, mention this circumstance. Tertullian pronounces *the baptizing into the mysteries of idols sacrilegious*. The washings which we find among the Asiatic nations, and which are of a religious nature, indicate that this practice has had extensive use. Even Pilate, that he might shew his innocence of Jesus' blood, made use of a sacramental sign. "He took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying I am innocent of the blood of this just person."

tism? Or what was the meaning of that rite? Its nature was perfectly understood already. They only enquired, whether his character was such, as to constitute him a person of proper authority to administer that ordinance. "Art thou Elias" returned to the earth? "Art thou one of the ancient prophets," sent anew to preach the way of righteousness? "Art thou the Christ" for whom we look? Had he appeared in any of these venerable characters, they expected, that according to long established custom, his disciples should be received by baptism. Now, though John could not plead his authority to baptize, under any of the above mentioned characters, yet, ~~that~~ he sustained such an exalted character as Christ's forerunner, as to obtain a special commission from Heaven to baptize. ~~And~~ while the prevalence of baptism among the Jews, and the enquiries made of John concerning his authority to baptize, make it very probable that he baptized as a *Jewish prophet*; it is rendered almost or entirely certain, from the following consideration, that though Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the region round about, went to receive his baptism, yet there is not the least mention made of his baptizing women. According to the Mosaic constitutions, women were represented by their husbands, which last were exclusively commanded to attend the great solemnities of religion. The males were also ordained exclusively to receive circumcision, the *seal of faith*. It may be asked then, if the baptism of John were Christian baptism, why did he not admit females to his baptism? When Jesus had set up his church, his Apostles baptized multitudes both men and women. Why did not John the same? It cannot be answered, that the shortness of the narration forbade any mention of the subjects of his baptism. The truth is, there is a great deal said of John and particularly of his baptism. His conversations are recorded, which he held with Pharisees and Sadducees, with Publicans and Soldiers. But there is not the least appearance, that a woman ever received his baptism: A decisive mark that he baptized as a Jewish prophet; and therefore I repeat it again, that John's baptism (being without the command of Christ) was as different from Christian baptism as that of any other prophet or holy man.

2. John's character, and the nature of his mission,

make it evident that *his* was not Christian baptism.

If John appeared as a disciple of Christ, then doubtless his practice should be our example. But he came in a character quite different from that of a follower of Christ. He came before his Lord, a messenger to proclaim his speedy coming. He came like other prophets, to tell what he knew of Christ. But he delivered no message from him. He was diligently enquired of, as to the character he proposed to sustain—Whether he was the Christ, or Elias, or that long expected prophet? He made his continual answer, I am not the Christ. I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, the messenger to announce his coming. Him I have never known. It will not be difficult to make it fully evident that John appeared as one of the prophets, though more favored than the rest, because he lived to see his Savior. In order to this, we shall produce the scriptural account concerning John, as it is delivered by ancient prophets, by the angel who was sent to announce his birth, by his father Zacharias, by John himself, and by Jesus Christ. “Behold, saith the prophet Malachi, I will send you *Elijah the prophet* before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Mal. iv. 5. The angel who was sent to Zacharias to foretell the birth of John, referring to the words of Malachi, declares, “and he shall go before the Lord in the spirit and power of Elias,” as a mighty prophet, “to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.” Luke i. 17. In the faith of this, Zacharias at the birth of John, describes him thus: “And thou child shall be called the *prophet* of the Highest.” Luke i. 76. John’s own testimony as we have seen is that he was the person predicted by the prophet Malachi. And to put the matter absolutely out of doubt, Jesus Christ tells us expressly, that the line of prophets continued until John. “The law and prophets were until John.” Luke xvi. 16. And lest any should suppose that he meant till John’s first appearance, it must be noticed that Christ explains his own meaning. “What went ye out into the wilderness to see?” Answering this himself, he declares John a *prophet*. And though more privileged than the preceding prophets, yet he absolutely cuts him off from his church, by affirming “Notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven,” i. e. among his disciples, properly so

called, "was greater than he." Mat. xi. 11. It cannot therefore be supposed, that John who was of the line of the prophets, the forerunner of Christ, should have the power to establish one of the most solemn ordinances of Christ's religion. Nor can it be believed, that one who was less enlightened than the least in the Christian church, could discover, or would venture to presume upon, the will of Christ as to the fashion of his church.

3. John practised baptism without the command of Christ, and therefore *his* was not Christian baptism.

It cannot but appear unreasonable, that any one in matters of such high concern as the public ordinances of Christianity, should attempt to establish them without the express authority of Christ. Yet if John's baptism was the baptism of the Christian Church, he must have instituted it, without any direction from *him*, who alone had authority to direct. That John was not commissioned by our Saviour, is plain beyond the shadow of contradiction. John was indeed sent *to baptise with water*; but it was by God who fixed on him as the favored prophet, who should precede the Saviour. At the very time that John informs us he was sent, he plainly tells us that he knew not Christ. "I saw the spirit of God descending from Heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. *And I knew him not*: But he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon him, the same is he that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost:" John i. 32, 33. It was revealed to him that he should receive a sign, by which he should know Christ, and till he received that sign, he was as ignorant of the person of Christ as others. So great indeed was his ignorance, that long after this he sends two of his disciples to enquire, "Art thou he that should come or look we for another." Mat. xi. 3. Now can it be supposed, that one so unacquainted with the founder of Christianity as John certainly was, might presume to fix upon its distinguishing ordinances? John observed the Passover, and never the Lord's Supper, yet no one feels himself bound to imitate him. And if not so, neither ought we to regard any practices which he followed without the Saviour's command. Fact and reason unite in demanding our belief that Christ

as the head of the church reserved this institution of baptism to himself. He designed but two sacraments in his church. And who so proper as himself to fix them? The one he did confessedly establish himself, and I think every impartial mind will allow that he instituted the other on the same occasion. He was Lord of all, the Head of his church, and the sole author of its sacraments.

4. Christ partook of John's baptism; an evidence that it was not Christian baptism.

In all that concerned Jesus as a man, he submitted to the institutions and practices of the Jews—but in every tittle that was connected with his church, and peculiar character, he consulted not with flesh and blood. He was sovereign Lord of his church, its doctrines and its ordinances. Since he had come into the world, he chose not to depend on man, but to make man depend on him. He would not permit any one to fix without his authority, what should be the usages of his church in after ages. All was his own. His people he purchased with his blood, and the path of their duty he determined with his own wisdom. What therefore he received personally from another could not belong to his church. That Jesus did himself originate the baptism to be used in his church, is rendered pretty certain by the circumstance that, he himself did not baptize. For reasons soon to be examined, he partook of John's baptism. But lest any should suppose that all came from John, and must be handed down in regular succession, Christ stopped the succession, refused to administer baptism himself; and by his divine will and sovereign power, directed his disciples to baptize; though for ought that appears they themselves had never received that ordinance.

Besides, if this was Christian baptism, then was Christ baptized into himself. He was one of his own disciples. An absurdity which is seen as soon as it is mentioned. To be baptized into Christ is to confess sin, to believe in him, to follow him and hope for salvation by him. None of which could Christ reasonably do. This baptism must therefore have been something very different from Christian baptism.—If it then be asked, why did Christ submit to be baptized? His own words furnish the solution. John asked the same question, and received for answer, “Suf-

fer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Mat. iii. 15.—If it had been his design to set an example to his followers, it was easy and natural to have then informed John that such was his intention. Indeed we cannot well understand how he could, ~~and~~ explaining to him that he was about being introduced into his own church, if such had been his meaning. The Baptist himself, was powerfully struck with the unfitness of his administering such an ordinance to the Savior. "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" Jesus then informs him that righteousness, or the established order of things, and that the *righteousness* or truth\* of God required it. Christ's baptism therefore, was not that he might be admitted into the church. Christ's church was not yet set up. But it was *that every word of God might be fulfilled*. It was as you all know revealed to John that the Son of God should be designated to him by a miracle; the Holy Ghost descending visibly upon him. This word once spoken must have its accomplishment. God had in his holy purposes fixed on the baptism of John, as the means by which he would draw to Jesus Christ the attention of the Jewish nation. When therefore John hesitated to baptize him, Jesus informed him that Revelation could not be all fulfilled but in connexion with his baptism. When therefore John remembered the word of the Lord, "that he should see the Holy Ghost descending upon Jesus," then he permitted him, the Holy Ghost descended upon Christ; and thus at his baptism was *fulfilled all righteousness* or revealed truth.

In another important point of view *all righteousness was then fulfilled*. Christ by his baptism, completed the whole round of duties prescribed by the Jewish law, and fulfilled every part of that system, to which as yet he was obedient. Circumcision and sacrifice, in obedience to the law, he submitted to. In order to be a Priest, and especially the High Priest of his people,

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\* The word *righteousness* in the Holy Scriptures, often signifies *truth*. And then Jesus' reason would read thus: "Suffer it to be so now for thus it becometh us to fulfil all truth." In thee O Lord do I put my trust, deliver me in thy *righteousness*." Ps. xxxi. 1. In which passage righteousness is the same with truth, as is fully evident from the fifth verse. Vide also, Is. xlii. 6.—xlv. 19.

he must be *washed*, (baptized) and anointed. Exod. xxix. 4--21.] This was prophesied [Is. lxi. 1.] of Christ; and, in the fourth chapter of Luke, he appropriates the prophecy to himself. Luke iv. 18. Therefore in order to fulfil all the righteousness of the law, and at the same time fulfil the *truth or righteousness* of prophecy, he received the legal purification (or baptism) and was anointed with the Holy Ghost.

5. John's baptism was in *its very nature*, distinct and separate from Christian baptism.

John himself, the apostles, and Christ Jesus speak of it as distinct. When John was asked of his baptism, his answer bespeaks a difference between his baptism and that of Christ. "I indeed baptize with water; but there standeth one among you whom ye know not." John, 1. 26. He that stood among them, was to baptize them with a different efficacy, with the Holy Ghost. This was not and could not be given by John's baptism. His baptism embraced no such benefits. The Apostles also, as appears by their after practice, thought the baptism of John very different from that of Jesus. When Paul perceived that certain persons calling themselves disciples, had not received nor even heard concerning the Holy Ghost, he enquired with surprise, "Unto what then were ye baptized;" as if he had said, surely ye have not received Christian baptism; you must have been introduced into some dispensation very different from the Christian. Our Savior also sets the baptism of John in direct opposition to his own. After his resurrection, he met his assembled disciples and commanded them to wait a certain time at Jerusalem, that the promise made unto them might be fulfilled, saying "For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence," Acts i. 5. If it be asked wherein consists the difference? It is answered, that it consists partly *in degree* and partly in the *very nature* of the things. When it is said that the difference between John's baptism and that of Christ consists in degree, it is designed to convey an idea that, to a certain length, John led his disciples toward Jesus. Like the other prophets he preached what he knew of Christ. He saw the approaching *Sun of Righteousness*, as a man would view the first rays of the approaching sun reddening the at-

mosphere. Such an one would be well fitted to rouse up, and prepare men for the approaching and glorious wonder. But if he had never before seen the sun, he would be quite ignorant of its nature. Such was John with regard to Christ. He constantly affirmed "I am not he." He constantly affirmed "and I knew him not."—John's baptism however differed not only in degree, but also in its very nature from that of Christ; inasmuch as the forerunner is different from his coming Lord. John came not to preach the Gospel, and therefore his was not a Gospel baptism. He came only to awaken mens attention, to tell them that the Lord of life was at hand, and that they must believe *in him*; that he would teach them a better doctrine and give them a more perfect baptism. Accordingly John's baptism is called by a distinctive name, *the baptism of repentance*.\* Christian baptism is that *of faith*. Now his baptism being that of repentance, is in exact conformity with his character and mission, which was to *prepare* the way of the Lord. ~~One~~ how could he so effectually prepare the way of the Lord, as by teaching and awakening men to repentance. We now well understand that repentance prepares the heart for the reception of Christ. John's baptism was a type of the troubled, though salutary, waters of repentance flowing from the sight of the broken law; Jesus' baptism, was a type of the peaceful streams of life flowing from the throne of a reconciled Father—We have already observed that John, that Christ, and his apostles, acknowledged a difference between the two dispensations; and we now remark that the Jews did distinctly perceive this difference. "There arose a question or dispute between some of

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\* From the earliest ages of Christianity, John's baptism was fully understood to be distinct from Christianity. Tertullian, an eminent father of the second century, thus expresses himself concerning John's baptism. 'The ordinance (*actum*) of the baptism of *repentance* being received, puts man into the situation of a *candidate* for remission of sins, and sanctification about to follow from Christ. For as he (John) preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sin, he thereby declared that *that* remission was yet future. If penitence precedes and remission follows, then this is to prepare the way. But he who *prepares* is not the same with him who *accomplishes*, Pol. Syn. Tom. iv. 715.

John's disciples and the Jews about purifying." John iii. 25. And that this question or dispute was about baptism, hardly admits of the smallest doubt; the whole discourse before and after relating to baptism. And there are circumstances there related, well calculated to awaken a spirit of disputation. It was then John's disciples uttered the complaint—"Behold he baptizeth, and all men come unto him." This dispute therefore must either have arisen from the characters of John and Christ or the diversity of the forms they used. If the characters had been united in one object and in one mode, and John was not different from Christ, except in person, then there was no subject of dispute. John and his disciples might have informed the Jews, that their master and Jesus Christ were united in one object. If the question was about the form, then it is worthy the attention of those who insist that John baptised by *immersion* in Enon, "because there was much water there;" that, at that very time, Jesus baptized crowds in Judea; "for all men came unto him," without any concern whether there was much or little water.

6. John declined and hastened to decay as soon as the gospel standard was erected and Christian baptism instituted—The splendor of his mission appeared no longer than until Jesus was manifested. When he was manifested to Israel the forerunner withdrew. The morning star disappeared when the sun arose; it was obscured, it directly vanished away. His disciples were filled with grief and envy. While Christ was with his disciples baptizing in Judea, John was also baptizing in Enon near to Salim. There John's disciples expressed their concern that the glory of Jesus augmented daily, while their master's fame and splendor faded fast away. "Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou bearest witness, behold the same baptizeth, and all men come unto him." John iii. 26.—John, who understood this matter perfectly, in his answer unfolds to them not only the difference but opposition also of character between his Lord and himself. "Did I not tell you that I am not the Christ; but am sent before him?" Did I not tell you that I am not worthy to loose the latchet of his shoe, much less to set up one of the ordinances of his church; either as a competitor or a partner. I now tell

you, "he must increase but I must decrease."\* He took a pleasure in being superseded, in retiring, and standing by to hear the Bridegroom's voice: "This my joy therefore is fulfilled." Think it not strange my disciples, if my baptism is deserted. I appeared before Jesus preaching the baptism of repentance; but the object of faith, Christ and his gospel are now revealed, and the baptism of faith is set up; the messenger is no more when his Lord is come, and my institutions must decay since Christ shall set up his kingdom. In fact the commission of John seems to have extended no farther than to introduce Christ according to God's appointment, to the notice of the Jewish nation. He declares that "for this end he baptized, that Christ should be manifest to Israel." This was done when the Holy Ghost descended on him and a voice from heaven proclaimed "this is my beloved son hear ye him." John's course of *righteousness was now all fulfilled*; he withdrew, his labors ceased, and the next account of him is that he was cast into prison.

7. John's baptism was different from Christian baptism, because they who received it had no instruction concerning the Holy Ghost.—This is a circumstance which ought to set the matter beyond all doubt or question; of this truth we are assured by the sacred writer, Acts xix. 2. When Paul travelled through the churches, he came to Ephesus, and in his preaching he found certain disciples. Not knowing whether or not they had been instructed by one who had the power of imparting spiritual gifts, and wishing them to enjoy the consolations of the Comforter, 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 if there be a Holy Ghost." How different the Christian baptism as we learn from the institution of it by

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\* It is a very natural and easy supposition, that many who had been baptized by John afterwards came to Jesus and his baptism. The disciples jealousy, for they seem to have been truly jealous, at their master's decrease—the vast multitudes that flocked to Christ while John was deserted—and John's answer to the complaints of his followers, "I must decrease," raise the presumption almost to a certainty, that many who had been baptized by John were baptized again by Christ's apostles.

Jesus Christ? "Go ye therefore teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." Mat. xxviii. 19. What if Paul had baptized in his own name and not as a disciple, should we confide in what he did as our example? It will be answered, no. If any now would baptize without *the name of Christ*, should we receive them as our patterns? It will be answered, no. And if John baptized without the *name of the Holy Ghost*, shall we receive him as a Christian Baptist? It must be answered, no. John seems to have had but little knowledge more than the prophets had concerning the third person of the *blessed Trinity*; and what he did know, had no connexion with his baptism. He therefore did not teach it to his disciples. His doctrine was a doctrine not of instruction, but of conviction. In conformity with this, his baptism was solely a baptism of repentance toward God. Wherefore these Jews resident at Ephesus, though in their visits to the temple at Jerusalem they had received John's testimony and baptism; yet had they never heard any discourse concerning the *Holy Ghost*, nor witnessed any baptism in his name.—In consequence of this they were instructed in the Christian faith, and by the Apostles command, received a Christian baptism. This furnishes a last argument.

8. That they who had been baptized by John were afterwards baptized by the apostles.—And this, one would think, should conclude the matter absolutely, and establish the entire difference between the baptism of John and that of the Apostles. As soon as Paul found these men ignorant in so material a point, he evidently expresses his surprize that they should be called by the name of disciples. "Unto what then were ye baptized?" The form of this question is peculiar, and its aim is evidently to let them know that they were not yet Christian *brethren*; that they were scholars or disciples only. As if he had said: It is impossible that you should have been baptized by Christ or any of his disciples—from them you would have learned something of the Christian doctrine.—They answered, we have not been baptized by Christ, nor by his Apostles, nor by any of his disciples; we have only received the testimony of John concerning Jesus. The Apostle then reminded them, "that when

John preached the baptism of repentance, he said unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is on Christ Jesus." Acts xix. 4. In which words the Apostle tells them that John had no church nor durable discipleship: that he had no new doctrines of his own; but that when Christ was come they must hear him, believe in him, be baptized into him and received into his church. "When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." Acts, xix. 5. Enlightened by the discourse of Paul, they perceived that they were still nothing more than Jews waiting for Christ. They now believed on him, received his doctrine, were baptized in his name, became his disciples, and received the Holy Ghost.

Thus have I labored to open up this matter and set it in its proper light. I have studied candor, have endeavoured continually to cherish a Christian spirit, and I hope have carried conviction.--The only observation I shall make from the whole of this argument is, that if John's baptism be thus different in all its circumstances from that of Christ, then John's baptism be its form what it may, is no example to us Christians. Even if there was no difficulty concerning the mode of John's baptism: Yet why look to that for an example which *in its whole nature* is essentially different from Christian baptism.

The various texts concerning John's practice which have been drawn into the disputes concerning baptism, must be laid aside as of no avail. Not being commissioned by Christ he was no more a Christian in his profession or his practice than Abraham and David and the ancient prophets.

It may be proper in the conclusion of this discourse, to examine the *mode* of Christian baptism, and see in what form it presents itself, keeping out of view the baptism of John, as having no reference to the subject. On the side of those who deny sprinkling to be baptism, the argument is very narrow indeed. A few passages, not more than three or four, can by them be urged in favor of their scheme. Among these, let it be observed, there is nothing which our Saviour said, nor any thing alluded to which he did. Nor is there any thing in the institutions of God's antient church, which gives the least countenance to immersion. It is however said of Philip and the Eunuch,

“ they went down into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him.” Acts viii. 38. Christians are also said to be “ buried by baptism into death.” Rom. vi. 4. And to be “ buried with him (Christ) in baptism.” Col. ii. 12. One or two passages besides these, are sometimes produced on this subject, but they appear to have no bearing on the argument. Let us with brevity and candor, examine the passages referred to—The case of the Eunuch is thus related : “ And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him.” From this it is argued, that the Eunuch was immersed. But as this is not declared, the circumstance of the case must fix our opinion. I suppose it will not be contended, that this was a place set apart for baptism by immersion. I suppose also that it will not be contended, that Philip and his companion passed by many waters, till they came to one with banks and depth sufficient for this purpose. But while the awakened man rode in his chariot with the Evangelist, he received the heavenly illumination, and discovering by the way *a certain water*, for ought we know a fountain or a little stream, he begged to be baptized. Philip consenting, they both alight and go down into or to the water, and he was baptized. The expression, *a certain water*, leaves little doubt but that it was a small stream or fountain. In a country well watered like our own, how many streams might be passed without the possibility of immersion? How many might be passed, where it would be inconvenient, even to administer sprinkling without going into the shallow stream? Besides, there is not the least intimation given of preparation for being immersed under the water. We are not informed that the Eunuch laid aside his garments, or put off his purple robe, and prepared himself; yet, in the nature of things, we should have looked for such particulars. To have gained such a convert to the faith, must have occasioned unusual joy; and joy loves to dwell on particulars. No such circumstances are mentioned, and we have no reason to suppose that any such existed. From the strain therefore and circumstances of this narrative, we are led to believe that in the midst of their heavenly converse, they passed by a certain water, when alighting from the chariot, the Eunuch

received the symbol of the blood of sprinkling, and went on his way rejoicing.—The next passage produced in favor of baptism by immersion is Rom. vi. 4. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death.” It is argued from hence, that Christians are in baptism to be buried under the water. To rectify this mistake, we make the following observations:—The Apostle is not in this place discoursing about baptism at all—he uses such a variety of figures to elucidate the point on which he dwelt, that we are assured he did not refer to the mode of baptism—and when he speaks of rising from our burial, we plainly see that his heart was not now on forms, but on the business of persuading Christians to die to sin and rise to holiness. The Apostle’s object was to wean the disciples’ heart from sin, as may be readily learned from the beginning of the chapter. In order to this, he tells them they were one with Christ, that they were *crucified* with him, that they were *dead* with him, that they were *buried* with him. From which we see nothing like the mode of baptism in his subject. Neither do the figures used permit us to think, that he referred to the mode of baptism in this particular expression. In the words immediately before, we are said to be *baptized into his death*; or, in other words, to be *dead with him in baptism*; for the meaning of those two phrases is precisely the same. No one will suppose a literal meaning to this expression, *dead with him in baptism*; and if not, so neither to the following one, *buried with him in baptism*. But it will farther, and if possible, still more distinctly appear that the apostle had no allusion to immersion in baptism, from the explanation which he gives to the expression *risen with Christ*. Burying and rising are opposites in their signification. If buried in this passage, signifies put under the water; then risen, must signify come out of it—But does the Apostle thus explain, rising with Christ? He does not. But he plainly tells us what he does mean. He informs us that he meant *walking in newness of life*. Dead and buried with Christ means nothing else, than that Christians being united to Christ, ought not to sin, because they are spiritually joined with him in his death and burial which is declared to the world, and sealed to them in their baptism. The other passage, Col. ii. 12. is so precisely similar

to the one now mentioned, that an explication is unnecessary.

We have now considered what argument would remain in favor of baptism by immersion, John's baptism being excluded.—Let us next examine what appears in the Holy Scriptures in favor of baptism by sprinkling—In favor of this many things appear.

1. All the ancient representations of the precious blood of Christ, were made by sprinkling. In the passover, the paschal lamb pointed directly to Christ, and its blood to his blood. The precise manner in which the blood of the lamb was used, is made known to us by the Apostle. "Through faith he (Moses) kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood." Heb. xi. 28. When the foul and subtle disease of the leprosy was to be cleansed, which so expressively represents the disease of sin, the priest was to take him that was to be cleansed, and sprinkle the blood upon him seven times. Lev. xiv. 4—27. And so of every other thing which prefigured the atonement of Christ.

2. The gift of the Holy Ghost, and the blessings of Christ, are spoken of in language favorable to sprinkling. "I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed." Is. xlv. 3. Isaiah, speaking of the benefits of Christ, thus describes them: "So shall he *sprinkle* many nations." Is. lii. 15. And Ezekiel, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. A new heart will I give you." Ez. xxxvi. 25, 26.

3. Not only was the blood of Christ typified by sprinkling, but, after it was shed, it was called *the blood of sprinkling*. "Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the *blood of sprinkling*, that speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." Heb. xii. 24. Peter also in the address of his first epistle, gives the blood of Christ the same appellation. "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience, and the *blood of sprinkling*." 1 Pet. i. 2. I know not how, with propriety, we could represent the blood of Christ in any other way than by sprinkling, since it was by the command of God, thus represented in his ancient church; and for our direction in this matter, in the new dispensation, is called the blood of sprinkling.—

4. Christ has given us an example of using water

in this manner, as a sign of his blood. Whoever will consider the blessed actions of our Saviour, on that night in which he was betrayed, (John xiii,) will have little cause to doubt, but that as he did on that night institute the sacrament of the Lord's supper, so he did in like manner institute baptism immediately before it. When he had eaten the passover for the last time, he riseth from the (paschal) supper, and pouring water into a bason, useth it as a sacramental sign. In full proof that this was a symbol of his blood, and not the washing of feet, then customary among the Eastern nations, are those sayings of Christ on that occasion: "What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter. If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me. And ye are clean, but not all, for he knew who should betray him." If it had been only a washing of feet, in token of affectionate regard, then Peter knew the meaning of it now, as well as he could at any after period. Had it been only a customary expression of friendship, Peter would have had as full an interest in Christ without as with it. If there had been no reference to any thing, but simply a washing of the feet, then Judas being washed, would have been clean, as well as the rest of the disciples. The truth is, Christ was using a sign of his own blood, and seems to have been teaching the ordinance of baptism. Having finished what he designed principally, he put on his garments, sat down again, and as his heavenly custom was, he drew an inference from the manner of the transaction; and taught his disciples a lesson of condescension.—The argument now is closed, and the candid Christian is left to judge, to decide, and with humble faith, to draw near to the *blood* of sprinkling.

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