

CONFESSION OF FAITH.

CHAPTER 28.-Of Baptism.

III. Dipping of the person into the Water, is not necessary: but, Baptism is rightly administered, by pouring, or Sprinkling water upon the Person¹.

Question 1.—*Is dipping in water necessary to baptism being rightly administered?*

Answer.—No. Acts 2:41; 16:33; Mark 7:4. Thus do the Anabaptists err maintaining that dipping is an absolute and necessary ceremony in baptism. They are confuted for the following reasons: 1.) The verb “baptize” clearly can be translated as “pour” or “sprinkle.” “...except they wash (βαπτίσωνται—*baptize*), they eat not”, Mark 7:4. But the washing of hands generally occurs by allowing water to be poured upon the hands, 2 Kings 3:11. 2.) Because we read of three thousand baptized in one day, in the streets of Jerusalem, by twelve apostles at the most, where there is no river to dip them into, Acts 2:41. And was not Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the region round about Jordan, baptized by John the Baptist himself alone, which could not be done to all and every one by dipping, Matt. 3:5, 6. 3.) Were not many baptized in private houses, as we read in the history of the Acts, 10:47 and 18:8 with 9:17 and 16:33. 4.) Because dipping of infants and others of weaker constitution into water in cold countries, would be hurtful and dangerous to them. But God will rather have mercy than sacrifice, Matt. 9:13.

It is often, but erroneously, supposed that the controversy between Anabaptists and the rest of the Christian Church with respect to Baptism is a question of mode; they affirming that the only right mode is to immerse—we affirming that the best mode is to sprinkle. This is a great mistake. The real Anabaptist position is, that the command to baptize is a simple and single command to immerse, in order to symbolize the death, burial, and resurrection of the believer with Christ. The true position maintained by other Christians is, that baptism is a simple and single command to wash with water, in order to symbolize the purification wrought by the Holy Ghost, Tit. 3:5. Hence the mode of washing is not essential. According to our view, the essential matter is the water, and the application of the water in the name of the Trinity. According to their view, the essential matter is the burial, total immersion, in water or sand, as the case may be.

Question 2.—*Is baptism rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person?*

Answer.—Yes. Heb. 9:10, 19, 20, 21, 22. Thus do the Anabaptists and other Immersionists err maintaining that pouring and sprinkling are not proper modes of administering baptism, but immersion only. They are confuted because: 1.) The word βαπτίζω (*baptizo*) in its classical usage, means *to dip, to moisten, to wet, to purify, to wash*. 2.) In the Septuagint, βάπτω and baptize occur five times. Thus, Dan. 4:33,

¹ Heb. 9:10, 19, 20, 21, 22; Acts 2:41; 16:33; Mark 7:4.

Nebuchadnezzar is said to have been wet (*baptized*) with the dew of heaven. Eccles. 34:30, [βαπτιζόμενος ἀπὸ νεκροῦ καὶ πάλιν ἀπτόμενος αὐτοῦ, τί ὠφέλησεν ἐν τῷ λουτρῷ αὐτοῦ]—“He that washeth [baptizes] himself after the touching of a dead body, if he touch it again, what availeth his washing?”;—but this purification was performed by sprinkling, Num. 19:9, 13, 20; Cf. 2 Kings 5:14. 3.) In the New Testament, βαπτίζω, is used interchangeably with νίπτω which only means to wash. Cf. Mark 7:3, 4; Luke 11:38; Matt. 15:2, 20; observe—a.) That to baptize is there used interchangeably with to wash. b.) The washing was to effect purification, for the unbaptized hands are called the unwashed and unclean hands. c.) The common mode of washing hands in those countries is to pour water upon them. The rich have servants to pour the water on their hands; the poor pour the water on their own hands. 4.) When John’s disciples disputed about baptism, it is expressly said to have been a dispute about *purification*, John 3:25; 4:2. 5.) The same idea is uniformly expressed by the word *baptism* or *baptisms*, in the New Testament. In Mark 7:2–8 we read of the baptisms of cups, pots, brazen vessels, and tables (couches upon which several persons reclined at table). These things could not be, and were not, immersed. The whole object of the service was not burial, but *purification*. In Heb. 9:10 Paul says that the first tabernacle “stood only in meats and drinks, and divers baptisms”; and below, in verses 13, 19, 21, he specifies some of these divers baptisms. 6.) Baptism with water is emblematic of baptism by the Holy Ghost, the object of which is spiritual purification, Matt. 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:26, 33; Acts 1:5; 11:16. Spiritual baptism is called “the washing of regeneration, and renewing, of the Holy Ghost.” Tit. 3:5. Baptism with water symbolizes baptism by the Holy Ghost. 7.) Baptism of the Holy Ghost, of which water baptism is the emblem, is never set forth in Scripture as an “immersion,” but always as a “*pouring*” and “*sprinkling*.” Acts 2:1–4, 32, 33; 10:44–48; 11:15, 16. Of the gift of the Holy Ghost it is said, he “came from heaven,” was “poured out,” “shed forth,” “fell on them.” Isa. 44:3; 52:15; Ezek. 36:25–27; Joel 2:28, 29. 8.) The universally prevalent manner of effecting the rite of purification among the Jews—from the analogy of which Christian baptism was taken—was by sprinkling, and *not* by immersion. The hands and feet of the priests were to be washed at the brazen laver, from which water poured out through spouts or cocks, Ex. 30:18–21; 2 Chron. 4:6; 1 Kings 7:27–39; Lev. 8:30; 14:7, 51; Ex. 24:5–8; Num. 8:6, 7; Heb. 9:12–22. 9.) In 1 Cor. 10:1, 2, the Israelites are said to have been “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” (Compare Ex. 14:19–31.) But the Egyptians who were immersed were *not* baptized; and the Israelites who were baptized were not immersed. Dr. Carson (an Immersionist “authority” on this subject) says Moses got “*a dry dip!*” In 1 Pet. 3:20, 21, it is said that baptism is the antitype of the salvation of the eight souls in the ark. Yet the very gist of their salvation consisted in their not being immersed. 10.) Among all the recorded instances of baptism performed by John the Baptist and the apostles, there is not one in which immersion is asserted, while there are many in which it was highly improbable—a.) Because the apostles baptizing and the early converts baptized were all Jews, accustomed to purify by pouring and sprinkling. b.) Because of the vast multitudes baptized at one time, and the known scarcity of water in Jerusalem and generally in the situations spoken of. The eunuch was baptized on the roadside in a desert country, Acts 8:26–39. Three thousand were baptized in one day in the dry city of Jerusalem, which depends upon rain—water stored in tanks and cisterns, Acts 2:37–41. Paul was baptized by Ananias right at his bedside. Ananias said, “*Standing up, be baptized*”; and “*standing up he was baptized*.” Acts 9:18; 22:16. c.) The

earliest pictorial representations of baptism, dating from the second or third century, all indicate that the manner of applying the water to the body of the baptized was by pouring.

Question 3.—*How then should we understand those texts which the Anabaptists and Immersionists use to “prove” immersion?*

Answer.—Anabaptists and other Immersionists, have departed from the uniform faith of Christendom, on this point: and while they do not wholly discard the purification, make baptism primarily symbolical of Christ’s burial and resurrection. They teach that, as the supper commemorates His death, so baptism commemorates His burial and rising again. True, the believer, in commemorating His death in the supper, receives also a symbol of the benefits purchased for us therein. So, in commemorating His burial and resurrection, there is a symbolizing of our burial to sin, and living again unto holiness. But the main meaning is, to set forth Christ’s burial and resurrection. Only three texts can be quoted for this view. Rom. 6:3–5; Col. 2:12, and 1 Cor. 15:29, especially the first.

He would be a hardy man, who would base any theory on the exposition of a passage so obscure as 1 Cor. 15:29. A more probable explanation is, that the Apostle here refers to the Levitical rule of Num. 19:14–19. Were there no resurrection, a corpse would be like any other clod; and there would be no reason for treating it as a symbol of moral defilement, or for bestowing on it, so religiously, the rites of sepulture. But this exposition presents not a particle of reason for regarding Christian baptism as a commemoration of Christ’s burial. The other two passages are substantially identical: and, under the figure of a death and rising again, they obviously represent a regeneration. Compare especially Col. 2:11, 12; Rom. 6:4. So likewise the figures of circumcision, planting, and crucifixion, all represent the same, regeneration. This the Immersionist himself cannot deny. The baptism here spoken of is, then, not directly a water baptism at all: but the spiritual baptism thereby represented, Col. 2:11. It is the circumcision “made without hands.” Rom. 6:3, 4. It is a baptism not into water, but into death, *i.e.*, a death to carnality. Therefore it is clear the symbolism here points to the grace of regeneration, and not to any supposed grace in Christ’s burial. His burial and resurrection are themselves used here as symbols, to represent regeneration. As justly might the Immersionist say that baptism commemorates a crucifixion, a planting, a building, a change of a stone into flesh, a putting off dirty garments; because these are all Scripture figures of regeneration, of which baptism is a figure.