

SPRINKLING AND POURING,

XII.

Scriptural Modes of Baptism.

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SPRINKLING AND POURING, Scriptural Modes of Baptism.

“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 will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.”—Ezekiel xxxvi: 25, 26.

“And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh.”—Joel ii: 28, first clause.

We have chosen these two passages from the ancient prophets, as the foundation of the present discourse, not merely because they contain terms descriptive of certain modes of baptism practiced by ourselves in common with the great mass of the Christian church, but mainly because they set forth in such clear light that which is the *essence* of this gospel ordinance. The prophet Ezekiel here foretells of that great spiritual cleansing which God designed to perform through the gospel of his Son. And the prophet Joel predicts that glorious and wide-spread “ministration of the Spirit,” which began on the day of Pentecost; by the agency of which sinners were then, and are now, cleansed from sin. We are thus brought into contact with the very heart of the gospel—its saving doctrines, influences and effects. And it is here, brethren, we should ever go to learn the real nature of the Christian religion—the spirit of its observances and the design and meaning, and as far as necessary, the form of its ordinances. Instead of allowing the outward form to control our views of the substance, we should reverse the process. We freely admit the necessity of outward forms and ceremonies, in a religion designed for man, and that those which God has appointed should be carefully and sacredly

observed. But where there exists any doubt in regard to these, we insist that the proper method of removing it is to learn their meaning and design—the spiritual truth or operation of which lies at their basis—the great idea which is designed to be embodied in these outward forms.

Hence we begin our inquiry, to-day, in regard to the mode of baptism, by asking—*What is its real meaning and design?* Baptism is defined in our standards to be “a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life.” We use this not as authority but as a convenient statement of what we regard the word of God as teaching. Now while we find here and in the Scriptures, several items included in Christian baptism, yet we find one leading idea pervading them all, in which we conceive exists the essence of this ordinance. This idea is *spiritual cleansing*, or purification. But, inasmuch as there are two parties, properly speaking, God and the subject, the subject not merely receives the symbol of purification, but is also *consecrated—set apart—to the service of God*. Yet it is evident that this consecration depends upon the spiritual cleansing—flows from it—is its practical result, and its co-relative. If the cleansing is real, so will be the consecration: if only ceremonial or outward, there will be only a professed consecration. The latter, therefore, is the *secondary*, while the former, i. e., spiritual cleansing, is the primary and essential idea embodied in this sacrament. This view, we believe, covers every instance in which baptism is spoken of in the Bible; whether relating to inward spiritual baptism by the spirit and blood of Christ, the outward ordinance or its figurative applications.

First, then, I remark, that *as the initiatory ordinance of the gospel, fitly and necessarily symbolizes a spiritual cleansing and consecration*. The gospel comes to man as a sinner, finds him guilty and defiled; and it saves only by cleansing him from sin. Therefore, when God enters into relations with him, whether spiritual or outward, he can do so only by a transaction which recognizes the great facts, that man needs to be cleansed from sin and that the gospel provides that cleansing. This is the grand idea of the gospel, and hence appropriately

of this gospel ordinance. Therefore, baptism is properly called "a sign and seal of the covenant of grace;" it signifies the essential facts and doctrines of that covenant on which our salvation depends; and it seals its benefits to all who take hold of it by faith.

Now, in accordance with this general view, I remark, *secondly*, that the *Scriptures represent baptism as symbolizing the sinner's cleansing in regeneration by the Holy Spirit*. For example, Paul says (Titus iii: 5:) "He saved us by the *washing of regeneration*, and the *renewing of the Holy Ghost*." This plainly refers to an outward or ceremonial cleansing as a symbol of the new birth, and yet in such a way as to exclude the idea of baptismal regeneration. Again; in Ephesians (v: 26:) "that he might sanctify and *cleanse it* (his church) with the *washing of water* by the word." The word is the *means*; but there is evident reference to baptism as the *sign* of this cleansing. The same is true of what he says to the Corinthians: "but ye are *washed*, ye are *sanctified*." In all these and similar passages the main thing spoken of is inward purification, but there is also reference to an outward symbol of that purification.

But furthermore, there can be no doubt that the *agent and cause of regeneration and sanctification by which the sinner is cleansed from depravity is the Holy Spirit*. This is his peculiar office and work. In the first verse of our text from Ezekiel God promises to cleanse his people; in the second verse he explains by promising them a new heart; and in the verse following, he points out the agency by which this would be effected, by promising to put his Spirit within them. Throughout both the Old and New Testament, the Holy Spirit is represented as the agent of this purification of men. But the descent and operation of the Holy Spirit upon the hearts of men are repeatedly called a baptism. From this it follows inevitably that the leading idea of baptism is a spiritual cleansing. Thus, John the Baptist said of Christ (Mark i: 8:) "I indeed baptize you with water; but he shall *baptize you with the Holy Ghost*." Now, when and how did Christ do this? After his resurrection when he appeared to his disciples, he referred to this prediction of John, and added (Acts i: 15,) "but ye shall be baptized *with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*." Accordingly, on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembled disciples and upon many others, and thus was fulfilled the predic-

tion in our text from Joel, as well as that which John the Baptist uttered, as Peter declared on that occasion. Now, it is true, that one of the grand results of this outpouring of the Holy Spirit was to confer upon the disciples *miraculous gifts*. But (1) even in reference to this it is appropriately called a baptism, as being their full and final consecration to the great work to which God called them. There is no doubt, however, (2) that this pouring out of the Spirit was attended by important moral or spiritual effects even upon the disciples; conferring a far higher degree of sanctification than they previously possessed. But (3) in addition to this, there were *three thousand conversions on that day*—showing how extensively the Spirit carried on his work of *cleansing by regeneration*. Surely, this was a part of his baptism. (4.) When John predicted the baptism of the Spirit, he did not confine it to the disciples, but spoke of it as something which would be enjoyed by *many of his hearers*. Neither (5) was it in fact confined to the disciples, nor to those who possessed miraculous gifts. Thousands were converted to God under this ministration of the Spirit who had no such gifts. (6.) The text from Joel is an express prediction that the Spirit would be poured out upon *all flesh*, and that, as we have seen, began to be fulfilled by the spiritual baptism at Pentecost. From these considerations, we see plainly, that *baptism with the Holy Spirit* includes not only his extraordinary gifts, but his *ordinary work* in the *renewal and sanctification of men*.

But regeneration and sanctification do not constitute the entire cleansing needed by the sinner. He is *guilty* as well as *depraved*. Hence he needs *pardon* as well as a *new heart*. Accordingly we find, in the third place, that the Scriptures represent baptism as symbolizing the *cleansing of the sinner by the blood of Christ*. We need not show here that his actual deliverance from *guilt* is secured by the atonement, but only that this is signified by baptism. To see this, you need only observe, (1st) that Ananias said to Saul, (Acts xxii: 16,) “Arise and *be baptized, and wash away thy sins.*” No man’s sins can be washed away, in fact, except by the blood of Christ; hence this baptism was designed to symbolize the application of that blood. (2d.) Peter, addressing the multitude at Pentecost, (Acts ii: 38,) said, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, *for the remission of sins.*” and (3d) in his 1st Epistle iii: 21—

“The like figure whereunto even baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Here the sign is outward baptism—“the putting away the filth of the flesh.” The thing signified is inward baptism—“the answer of a good conscience toward God,”—which is secured only by the forgiveness of sin—showing plainly that the spiritual signification of this ordinance includes cleansing from guilt by the blood of Christ. Thus we find in the various instances in which the Scriptures speak of Christian baptism, with direct reference to its symbolical import, the view we have taken is fully sustained.

Even the baptism of John, though not Christian baptism, contained chiefly, if not exclusively, this idea of spiritual cleansing. It was always called the *baptism of repentance*. All its subjects professed repentance for sin, which involved, of course, a moral purification. In accordance with this, we read in John iii: 25—“Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying,” and the context clearly shows that this dispute related to baptism; thus establishing the meaning we have given to this rite. And still further, as we have seen, John represented his baptism as a prophetic symbol of *purification* by the Holy Spirit by which Christ was to baptize.

But then we find the Lord Jesus Christ submitting to be baptized by John. What did the rite signify in this case? Certainly not purification in the ordinary sense of a cleansing from sin—but, nevertheless, in a sense common in the Scriptures—the sense of *consecration—separation to a holy work*—often used synonymously with sanctification. Our Saviour was just entering on his actual work, as the High Priest of his people. He therefore “submitted to all righteousness” by yielding a substantial compliance with the divine law for the consecration of the High Priest. This is indeed the only sense in which we can regard this ceremony as appropriately performed upon the pure and spotless Redeemer. But even on the supposition, adopted by many, that by submitting to this rite our Saviour designed to set an example to his followers, the symbolical import of his act would correspond with the view we have presented of the leading idea of baptism.

It is in a sense similar to the above that our Saviour applied the term baptism to his final sufferings in replying to the ambitious request of the two sons of Zebedee, “Are ye able

to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am to be baptized with?" It was by his actual death that our Savior was fully set apart as both the High Priest of God and also the sacrifice offered for sin. He had indeed been the lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world, and in like manner the High Priest to offer that sacrifice. But now comes the consummation of this whole transaction. He approaches the very altar. He places himself thereon as the appointed, chosen and devoted victim. The consecration thus becomes the great and terrible reality. He experiences the baptism of blood. Hence Paul says, (Hebrews, x: 29,) that Christ "*was sanctified by the blood of the covenant.*" He was thus fully set apart as both the Priest and Sacrifice to appear for us in the Heavenly Sanctuary. It was with a similar meaning he said himself (John xvii: 19:) "*For their sakes I sanctify myself,*" which modern expositors unanimously acknowledge refers to his sacrificial death. (Oldshausen in loco.) It is true our Savior told these two disciples that they should experience a similar baptism, and yet their violent deaths were not attended by the same results; but it is also true, that by their baptism of blood they completed their self-consecration to the service of God.

But we find this secondary idea of *separation unto a holy service*, in other passages also; as, for example, where the Israelites are said to have been "baptized unto Moses, in the cloud and in the sea." By that cloud which was light to them and dark to the Egyptians, and that sea which drowned vast numbers of their enemies and then stood between them and their remaining enemies, they were set apart and separated to be God's people, under the leadership of Moses. The reference is not to any mode of baptism but to its spiritual import,—and if to any mode, certainly not to immersion. In like manner those passages which speak of Christians as "*baptized into Christ,*" and "*into his body,*" and "*into his death,*" refer to the spiritual meaning of baptism—that inward process which it represents—*separation from sin and the world—regeneration and union with Christ.* It is only in this view that we can give to them any consistent interpretation.

This is specially true of the disputed passages in *Romans and Colossians*, in which Christians are spoken of as "buried with Christ in baptism." The reference here is not at all to the *mode* of outward baptism, but to the *effect* of inward baptism. The passage repels the infidel cavil that Christians will sin be-

cause grace abounds. How does Paul repel it? He says Christians are “*dead to sin*—how then can they live any longer therein?” This is true only of true Christians; not of all the outwardly baptized. But how have Christians become thus dead to sin? He replies, “So many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death.” Now, Christ died in order to deliver his people from sin—not only its penalty but also its power, so that they should be “dead to sin. By spiritual, not by outward baptism, Christians are vitally united to Christ and to all that Christ did and suffered; so that they experience the results of his obedience and death. Thus as Christ died, was buried was raised again, to show the complete success of his atonement, all Christians are said to be identified with him in this whole process, and they are made one with him by their spiritual baptism. And as Christ, having died for their sins rose again for their justification, so they having died unto sin, now live again in newness of life. The whole force of Paul’s argument depends upon giving to baptism a spiritual signification. To make it refer to any mere form of this ordinance is to destroy its force and pervert its meaning; while to use those passages to prove that baptism is a symbol of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is to go counter to the whole current of Bible-teaching, as to the meaning of this gospel sacrament. To be consistent with this view, its advocates are bound to show a resemblance between immersion and crucifixion; since Christians are said to be crucified with Christ, in this same connection and with reference to the same point.

Such, then, as we learn from God’s word, is the real meaning of Christian baptism. It is a *symbol of spiritual cleansing* and *it involves* on the part of its subjects a consecration to God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, in whose name they are baptized.

Now, the *form of this ordinance* should, of course, express this, its grand meaning. Accordingly, we find *first* of all, that *water is the element* to be used—clean water—the universal emblem of purification. No one doubts this; and all must see how appropriate it is for an ordinance representing spiritual cleansing. Had baptism been a symbol of death and burial, then *earth* or a *cave* or *sepulchre*, would have been the better emblem.

Again; this water must be applied to the subject in such a way as to represent a cleansing. But there are several ways to do this; and where the exact form is not expressly defined in

the Scriptures, *any form is lawful which expresses the great idea of the ordinance*; while *that is to be preferred which is most accordant with the general current of scripture upon the subject*. Following this rule, our standards declare that—"Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person."

It might seem that the more water used, and the more generally it is applied to the person, the better it would be suited to symbolize a cleansing. But this is only a partial and human view, and does not accord with God's actual method in regard to all symbols and ceremonies. He looks upon man not merely as requiring *outward forms* in religion, but also as universally *prone to exalt, magnify and depend upon outward forms*, and thus to overlook and lose the substance. While, therefore, He meets the want of our nature, He takes care to guard against its infirmity. Accordingly, we see *this general law* pervading all his ordinances—viz: The symbol must be sufficiently plain and conspicuous, clearly to suggest and set forth the great idea or meaning of the ordinance, in distinction from all other ideas or meanings; but at the same time, not so conspicuous in form, not so imposing, not including so much *action* and outward ceremony as to tempt men to attach undue importance to the outward form—to rely upon it—to put it in the place of the thing signified. There must be enough of the external to aid and express faith; not enough to encourage superstition; enough to help us to see the Saviour; not enough to tempt us to make a Saviour of it; enough to give form to our spiritual obedience to Christ; not enough to make us feel that it is the obedience of Christ.

This law we find, not as a mere supposed analogy but as a fact, pervading all of God's appointments of religious service under both dispensations. We find it especially in those which symbolize *spiritual cleansing*. For, though baptism is peculiar to the New Testament, the idea contained in it is as old as the gospel itself. Nothing was so abundantly symbolized under the old dispensation as man's cleansing from sin. Both water and blood were used to express this. Now how were these applied? How did God symbolize the cleansing of sinners under a dispensation which itself foreshadowed and symbolized the gospel? We are left in no doubt here. The modes are here very minutely described. For example, when a leper was cleansed, he was simply sprinkled with the blood of a slain bird, mingled with water. This expressed sufficiently in God's view, his ceremonial purification, although

the leprosy itself had covered his whole body. True, he was afterward washed, but he was pronounced ceremonially clean immediately after the sprinkling, showing that to be the essential part of the ceremony. So, when one was cleansed from the defilement of a dead body *sprinkling was the chief ceremony*. It was that which cleansed him, in the sight of God; for, though other applications of water were added, yet it was expressly said of any one who remained defiled, "the water of separation hath not been *sprinkled* upon him; he is *unclean*." Then, again, we have the comprehensive statement of Paul in Hebrews: "For when Moses had spoken every precept to the people, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and *sprinkled* both the book and *all the people*, saying this is the blood of the covenant which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover, he *sprinkled with blood* both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law *purged with blood*." Thus this mere sprinkling had the effect of *purging* ceremonially all persons and things to which it was applied. Hence David prayed, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean," referring to the little sprig or bush which was dipped in the blood and then used to sprinkle that blood upon the persons or things to be cleansed. This was considered amply sufficient by an all-wise God. Not even all the blood, though of the smallest victims, was used; nor was the whole person of the worshipper, nor the whole body of the altar or tabernacle suffused with blood. A few drops symbolized the required cleansing most fully. In like manner a Levite was *cleansed* for the Lord's *service by sprinkling*. It is expressly said, "And thus shalt thou do unto them to cleanse them; sprinkle water of purifying upon them." When Aaron was consecrated the blood was put merely upon the tips of his right ear, of his thumb, and of his great toe—and both the blood and the anointing oil were *sprinkled upon him*: and yet his whole person was duly *consecrated* to God's service.

That all these ceremonies represented spiritual cleansing and consecration is clear, from the whole tenor of Scripture. We see it in the very terms used, and in all the subsequent references to them both in the Old and New Testament.

Now, if we find this law or method of cleansing by only a partial application of the element, pervading an economy distinguished as ceremonial and external, much more must we expect to see it in the ordinances of the gospel. We have

an admirable illustration of it in the incident of our Savior's washing the feet of the disciples. This, though not an ordinance, was a symbolical action. It was both a lesson of humility and a representation of spiritual cleansing, as the narrative clearly shows. Peter having objected to receiving such a service from his honored Master, Jesus told him it was necessary, or he could have no part with him. Seeing so much depended upon it, Peter, with his usual extravagance—his disposition to overdo whatever he did heartily, and in his proneness, at that time at least, to exalt and rely upon the outward sign, cried out—"Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." As much as to say, I need an entire cleansing; therefore, I need the symbol of it to be applied to my every part. Jesus replied, "He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit." This, though having no reference to baptism accords fully with the view we have taken of symbolical actions, viz: that application of water to one part sufficiently expresses the idea of spiritual cleansing.

Now, there is only one other sacrament of the New Testament besides baptism. Let us see whether our view is sustained by the form of that ordinance. The Lord's Supper presents the provision of salvation through Christ, under the idea of *nourishment* given and received for the life of the soul. The *bread* represents the *body* of Christ. But must the loaf equal in size the body of the Saviour in order to be a correct symbol? Or must there be a quantity of wine provided and set forth equal to the whole of Christ's blood? Such an idea all reject at once as grossly carnal. And so, likewise, the eating and drinking represent a *meal* which *nourishes* and *refreshes*; and yet, who ever dreamed that the communicant must eat enough of the bread actually to nourish him, or drink enough of the wine actually to refresh him? Such conduct, on the contrary, would be indecent and sinful. A little real bread and wine all consider an ample and proper provision of the elements for a lawful sacrament, and the eating of the least morsel of bread and the merest sip of wine, as a proper and lawful mode of receiving this sacrament—because this embodies and expresses most clearly and sufficiently in God's view the meaning of the ordinance. Why, then, should we suppose that in the sacrament of baptism, God departed from this general method of symbolizing his truth and the operations of his grace?

I ask you to notice, in the *next place*, in what terms God spoke, by his prophets, of the spiritual cleansing which they foretold would be widely experienced under the gospel. By Ezekiel he said—"Then will I *sprinkle clean water upon you and ye shall be clean.*" And by Isaiah he said, speaking of the future triumphs of Christ: "So shall he *sprinkle many nations.*" These passages certainly describe the inward purification of sinners under the gospel—and yet they represent it under the *symbol of sprinkling*, as a form of ceremonial purification. If God had intended to change the form of the symbol, and still more if he had intended to make another form essential, i. e. immersion, he would not have used such language as this. Much less would the apostle Paul speak of our having "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,"—and of "the blood of sprinkling which speaketh better things than the blood of Abel;" and Peter, also, of "the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ,"—all referring to the cleansing of the sinner and all written after baptism was instituted. Then, again, in a large number of passages predicting the gift of the Holy Spirit, the great purifier, God employs the word *pour*. For example, in Proverbs i: 23, "Behold, I will *pour out* my spirit unto you." In Isaiah (xxxii: 5,) "Until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high." Again, xlv: "I will pour my spirit upon thy seed." In Zech. (xii: 10,) "And I *will pour* upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications." In Mal. (iii: 10,) "If I will not open the windows of heaven and *pour you out* a blessing." And then in our text from Joel—"And it shall come to pass afterward that I will *pour out my Spirit* upon all flesh." We have already shown that this last prediction referred to what John and Christ and Peter, all called the *baptism of the Spirit*, which was realized at Pentecost; and hence we must regard all these predictions as describing spiritual baptism. Now, if you examine the New Testament narrative, you will find this baptism of the Spirit described invariably under the same forms as were described in the prophets. The Spirit is represented as coming "from heaven,"—as "falling upon them," as "poured out,"—as "shed forth." And, furthermore, the outward appearance was of cloven tongues of fire which *sat upon each of them.*" And notice, this baptism of the Holy Spirit is described *in no other terms which indicate mode or form*—not one of which can be tortured into an allusion to any

other mode, and least of all, to immersion. These facts are decisive. They settle the question. And no ingenuity has ever succeeded in breaking the chain of argument they furnish in favor of pouring, as a mode of baptism.

But I proceed *to remark, in the next place*, that our position is fully *sustained by the signification of the original terms* denoting this ordinance. You will, of course, not expect a dissertation upon this point in this discourse. I give it this little prominence, for several reasons: I do so, because it is the true method to settle all disputed questions as to the *form* of a religious ordinance, to learn the real *meaning* of the ordinance. Here, after all, is the real point of difference—the very *nature of baptism*. Zeal for a particular mode is leading thousands to misapprehend this main point. And yet this has not had due prominence, even in our own teachings. The cause of truth has suffered by our allowing ourselves to be confined to the discussion about *baptizo*, and to the single task of showing that it does not necessarily mean immerse. Show the people the real meaning of baptism, and they will soon adopt its scriptural form. But while I say this, let me not be understood as in anywise yielding the point with regard to the meaning of *baptizo*—on the contrary, our position gains strength with the progress of investigation. The narrow and unreasonable dogma that this word has but one solitary meaning, in all ancient writers, both sacred and secular, and in all its applications, has been triumphantly refuted. Even in *classic usage* it has been shown to be a *generic* word—often used to describe other modes of wetting and washing besides immersion. In the *apochryphal* and in the *inspired writings* it has been shown to have a still more general signification, i. e., so far as regards mere mode. This is especially true in all its applications to the religious ablutions and purifications common among the Jews. It was used—e. g. of the washing of a *female, at a fountain* in the midst of a military camp—of the washing of beds and couches and tables—and of the washing of *hands* before eating. Paul applies it to the ceremonial cleansings under the law, which, as we have seen, were performed in many instances by sprinkling—and as if to make its generic sense still more clear, he calls *these* “*divers* (or various) *baptisms*.” Indeed, it may well be questioned, whether the Jews ever employed immersion as a mode of ceremonial cleansing. Their mode, even of washing hands, was by pouring, lest a drop of water which had once touched

their flesh be defiled and hence by coming a second time in contact with them defile them again. Elisha's servant was described as one who "poured water upon his hands." This view, too, is confirmed by Titus iii: 56: "By the *washing* of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost—which He *shed on us* abundantly,"—where the washing of spiritual baptism, is described as the *shedding upon us* of the Holy Ghost. It has also been shown that in a number of instances this word is used with the preposition "en" denoting the use of water as the *instrument* of baptism. And in accordance with this, one passage in Luke has the dative of instrumentality without the preposition—"I indeed baptize you *with* water." Thus we have full warrant for saying that the modes of which we speak are amply sustained by the well established significations of these original words.

But I remark still *further that of all modes of baptism these are most consistent with the New Testament accounts of its actual administration.* It is an absolute begging the question to to assume the possibility of immersion in the case of Paul standing up in the house where he lodged, of Cornelius and his household in their own dwelling, of the Eunuch in a desert and of the jailor and his family in a prison. All the probabilities are against immersion and in favor of pouring or sprinkling as most compatible with the recorded circumstances. But when we consider the baptism of the three thousand at Pentecost by the disciples and of the multitudes by John, it is hard to admit even the possibility of it. For our part we cannot admit such a possibility. The mere fact of going to a stream, which however is stated in only a portion of these cases, proves nothing. They might go there to sprinkle or pour as well as to immerse. Ancient pictures indeed, as is well known, represent John the Baptist standing in the river and pouring water upon the head of our Saviour.

Such, my hearers, are the principal reasons, very briefly and summarily presented, why as a church, in common with the vast majority of our Christian brethren, we administer the ordinance of baptism by sprinkling and pouring. We believe that these modes truly and appropriately set forth the great idea of the ordinance—that they are most in accordance with God's general method in establishing symbolical ceremonies—that they correspond with the prophetic descriptions of gospel purification—that they are fully sustained by the signifi-

cation of the original terms relating to this ordinance—that they are most consistent with the New Testament accounts of its administration and also with the spirit and genius of Christianity itself. Hence we not only firmly and boldly maintain the perfect validity of baptism thus administered, but we express our decided and unequivocal preference for it above all other forms. But while we say this, we do not go to the extreme of denying the validity of baptism by immersion. We admit that this form does express the idea of the ordinance. Firmly as we adhere to our scriptural forms, and warmly as we are attached to them, may the day never come when we shall so exalt and magnify their importance as to erect them into tests of piety or church membership, and use them to shut out real Christians from our communion table and Christian ministers from our pulpits. It is a sore evil under the sun when even scriptural ordinances and ceremonies are made to usurp the place of God's inward, spiritual work by being made more prominent and more essential. And it is still worse when this is done with regard to only a *particular mode of a ceremony*—the form of a form. This is the very essence of formalism. It is ritualism carried to a most fatal extreme. Such a spirit, my hearers, is not a mere pardonable mistake. It is a prolific source of mischief. It eats out the very substance of Christianity, and leaves only its empty shell. It diverts perishing souls from the living Saviour and the Divine Spirit, and encourages them to rely on a mere form. It dwarfs the piety even of real Christians. It dries up every generous emotion. It kindles up the fires of bitter fanaticism. It produces the most intense form of sectarianism in existence, with all its attendant bigotry, exclusiveness and proselytism. It leads one portion of the church, like some of God's ancient people, to exalt its head in pharisaic pride, and say to all others, “stand aside for we are holier than thou;”—“The temple of Lord, the temple of the Lord are we.” God forbid that this spirit should ever have a home in our hearts. Let us maintain the truth in the spirit of the truth—with love to all our brethren, with charity to their errors, and with the unalterable purpose ever to hold aloft, above all other things, the great and really saving doctrines of the gospel. God forbid that either as ministers, or as a church, we should ever glory, same in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.