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A NEW ESTIMATE OF THE THEOLOGICAL
SITUATION.

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IN 1896 I made a study of our entire modern theological situation, gathering up the results in a comprehensive analysis. Recently it occurred to me that it would be worth while, now after almost fifteen years, to make a new study and a new estimate, using my old analysis as a starting-point, indicating the most significant changes which have taken place, and thus finding perhaps a fresh message for the Christian preacher.

THE MORAL SITUATION.

To understand thoroughly the theological situation, I began with the moral situation, and I discovered its root-peculiarity to be a failing sense of personal responsibility for character. Quickly I admitted that there was a fine emphasis upon duty, but in that emphasis I pointed out serious utilitarian and fatalistic flaws. "Duty is made into an elaborate advantage, and does not spring, simple and straight, out of moral obligation. Besides this, there is a fatalistic flaw: conduct is not regarded as a product of free personality. There is, therefore, no deposit in character for which the man holds himself altogether responsible. Thus the modern man grows apologetic toward himself as a total achievement. Seldom or never does he say to himself: 'I am this kind of a man, and I myself am responsible for being this kind of a man.'"

HOW SHALL WE BAPTIZE?

BY BENJAMIN B. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D., LITT.D.

THE broad simplicity which characterizes the allusions of the New Testament to the sacraments stands in very striking contrast with the anxious precisianism of the ecclesiastical prescriptions. A treatise on baptism, for example, especially if it emanate from one of the sacerdotal Churches, is apt to insist upon many details in the manner of applying the water which are quite foreign to the New Testament notices of the rite. We open, for instance, a recent Roman Catholic work on the Sacraments,¹ and read, broadly enough: "The proximate matter of baptism is washing, which may be performed not only by immersion, but also by affusion or aspersion." But there are at once added, with solicitous care lest the whole thing should fail by defect, certain prescriptions of what is requisite to "true washing." There must be, it seems, "(a) physical contact of the water with the body, (b) successive contact by the motion of the water over the body; and that, indeed, (c) in some quantity, that is to say, not in a drop or two, nor so that it has only the form of unction." This concern for little things is not altogether a growth of time. The earliest of "Church Orders,"—the *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles*,—already shows great regard for such minutiae. We are to baptize, we are there told,² "in living water." "But," it is graciously added, "if thou hast not living water, baptize in other water; and if thou canst not in cold, in warm; and if thou hast neither, pour water thrice upon the head in the name of Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit." Needless to say the New Testament has no care for such things. It simply commands that the disciples of Christ shall be introduced into their new relations by the rite of baptism; indicates incidentally that the element with which this baptism is to be performed is water; and, absorbing itself in the ethical and spiritual significance of the rite, leaves its externalities to one side.

¹G. van Noort, *Tractatus de Sacramentis Ecclesiae*, I. 1905. Pp. 135 ff.

²Chapter VII.

We are not to infer, of course, that we are free to make of baptism pretty much what we choose. The limitations imposed upon our mode of administering such a sacred rite by the great law of decency and order (1 Cor. xiv. 40) are not less stringent, they are only less petty, than those exacted by that disease of religion we call formalism. It is not to be denied that these limitations have frequently been overpassed; perhaps as often, certainly as seriously, through overvaluation as through contempt of the ordinance. We are all shocked when we hear of such manifest disregard of what is becoming as is evinced in the following anecdotes. John Mason Neale relates³ that a clergyman "taking the duty" in a little English parish, on being called upon to baptize an infant, found no water in the font. "He thought it, of course, an accidental omission, and asked for some. The clerk was in astonishment; however, he sent for a glass of water, thinking the clergyman wanted it to drink. And on conclusion, it came out that they never used it there." "At St. Martin's Church, Birmingham," writes Mr. A. C. Benson in his *Life of Archbishop Benson*,⁴ "on Sundays there were held what were called 'public christenings,' at which persons to be baptized were arranged round the communion rails, and sprinkled from the font with a brush, like a Roman asperging brush." But thoughtless corruptions like these are, in the nature of the case, exceptional.

The perversions of the rite which tend to become regular are rather such as are dictated by a sense of its immense importance. Thus the Jesuit missionaries in Canada, urged on by their belief that by the mere act baptism worked salvation, reduced it to a bald magical performance. "They had a special delight in baptizing dying infants, thus, as they believed, rescuing them from the flames of perdition"—we are quoting Sir William Robertson Nicoll's account:⁵

They did not hesitate to use equivocal methods in attaining their end. Their practice of baptizing infants at the point of death led the Indians to believe that baptism was a cause of death. So when the priest entered a lodge where a sick child lay in extremity, the scowling parents watched him

³*Letters to John Mason Neale, D.D.*, 1910, p. 33.

⁴Vol. I., p. 6. The date of the occurrence is about 1830.

⁵*The British Weekly*, April 20, 1911, p. 158.

with jealous distrust, lest unawares the deadly drop should be applied. How the Jesuits met the emergency is told with great pride by one of themselves. He says that a Jesuit Father baptized a little child two months old, in manifest danger of death, without being seen by the parents, who would not give their consent. "This is the device which he used. Our sugar does wonders for us. He pretended to make the child drink a little sugared water, and at the same time dipped a finger in it. As the father of the infant began to suspect something, and called out to him not to baptize it, he gave the spoon to a woman who was near, and said to her: 'Give it to him yourself.' She approached and found the child asleep; and at the same time Father Pijart, under pretense of seeing if he was really asleep, touched his face with his wet finger, and baptized him. At the end of forty-eight hours he went to heaven." Another of these naïve stories may also be told in the words of the missionary. A little boy, six or seven years old, was to be baptized. "His father, who was very sick, had several times refused to receive baptism; and when asked if he would not be glad to have his son baptized, he had answered, *No*. 'At least,' said Father Pijart, 'you will not object to my giving him a little sugar?' 'No; but you must not baptize him.' The missionary gave it to him at once; then again; and at the third spoonful, before he had put the sugar into the water, he let a drop of it fall on the child, at the same time pronouncing the sacramental words. A little girl, who was looking at him, cried out: 'Father, he is baptizing him!' The child's father was much disturbed, but the missionary said to him: 'Did you not see that I was giving him sugar?' The child died soon after; but God showed his grace to the father, who is now in perfect health." They would do anything to get at a sick infant. No menace and no insult could repel them from the threshold. They pushed boldly in and talked till suspicion was lulled to sleep, and then, pretending to observe the sufferer for the first time, approached it, felt its pulse, asked of its health, and then dexterously touched it with a corner of a handkerchief previously dipped in water. They murmured the baptismal words with motionless lips, and snatched another soul from the fangs of the infernal wolf.

And what are we to say of the filthy habit of immersing, at the great baptismal seasons, multitudes of children, sick and well alike, one after another, in the same font? One does not wonder that "the contamination of the water by skin diseases" has been suggested as one of the coöperating causes which led to the giving way of the practice of immersion to affusion in the Latin Church.* The entire subject is discussed by the Russian Bishop Hermogen in a formal treatise,⁷ after a fashion which

*J. Bellamy, in Vacant-Mangenot, *Dict. de Théol. Cath.*, II. 1905. Ed. 2546. I. Abrahams, *J. T. S.*, July, 1911, pp. 609-612, thinks sufficient cleanliness is secured, even when very small fonts are used, by the Jewish practice of the recipients bathing before their baptism one after the other in the same font.

⁷A translation of the treatise appeared in *The Church Eclectic* for August, 1900, pp. 431 ff.

would be amusing were it not so distressing. The infant, according to him, is to be baptized preferably in cold water, and the plea that the cold water may injure it is not to be admitted,—to add hot water “makes it no longer natural, but artificial.” If overtimid parents persist, then let the water be brought in some time before using it, that the chill may get off of it. How can there be any danger of the child taking cold and dying from the touch of the baptismal water, when it is immersed into it with the very object that it may receive from it new and spiritual life?^a Timorous people may demur too to their children being immersed in the same font and at the same time with children suffering from contagious diseases. “To remove all such fears,” let some of the water be drawn off into a separate receptacle, and let all the well children be baptized in the font itself, and *all those with diseases* (no matter how various!) be baptized, one after the other, in this separate receptacle! Surely fanaticism must hold the helm hard down, when the simplest laws of hygiene cannot be recognized as laws of God. Have we not good authority for saying, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”?

Clearly we cannot let either indifference or fanaticism determine for us how we should baptize. Not, however, because we particularly fear that our baptizing might be rendered invalid. A very indecent mode of baptizing may be a perfectly valid mode of baptizing. The method of baptizing which used to be practiced at St. Martin’s Church, Birmingham, will strike most of us as indecorous in the extreme. Yet it is precisely this way of baptizing which so sound a scholar and solid a thinker as the late Dr. Samuel J. Baird considered the right way to baptize, the way, he did not doubt, which was employed on the great Pentecost, when Christian baptism was inaugurated under such happy auspices,—“the water being sprinkled with a hyssop brush, and the recipients of the rite presenting themselves in companies of

^aSimilarly President A. H. Strong (*Systematic Theology*, ed. 1909, III. 940) bids those who doubt whether immersion can have been intended by Christ to be the universal mode of baptism, because, forsooth, it is often dangerous to health and life, to remember that “ardent feeling nerves even the body,” and adds the lines: “Brethren, if your hearts be warm, ice and snow can do no harm.” Can they not? And is it not written again, “Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”?

suitable size, by scores or by hundreds."⁹ We should not like to pronounce the mode of baptism seriously preferred by Dr. Baird no baptism at all. And who would have the heart to declare the poor little Russian babies to have passed through their infected bath in vain? If we are going to demand that our baptismal water shall be pure and clean, on pain of not being baptismal water at all, how pure and clean must we demand that it shall be? Must we have distilled water, fresh from the retorts? Would it not be better to remember that this water does not cleanse the flesh, but the soul, as Cyprian very patly reminds us, when discussing an analogous question,—the question, to wit, whether a whole bath is required for valid baptism, or true baptism can be administered with only a little water sprinkled on the person? Does not the Lord himself say, he asks, "Then will I sprinkle clean water on you, and ye shall be clean" (Ezek. xxxvi. 25)?¹⁰ To cleanse the soul, it is not a question either of the purity or of the abundance of the water, but of purity of intention and abundance of faith.

No doubt all perplexity would be at an end if the New Testament only prescribed a mode of baptism. But so would be at an end that evangelical freedom for which Christ has set us free; we should so far be entangled again in a yoke of bondage,—and who knows how little leaven it may take to leaven the whole lump? We are not living under a legal dispensation, with its minute enactments and precise requirements. We are living in the freedom of the gospel (in which all things are summed up in holding fast the Head); and we should not wish to subject ourselves again to ordinances ("Handle not, touch not, taste not"), nor permit ourselves to be judged in the mere externalities of our observances. The simple breadth of the New Testament dealing with baptism is consonant with the whole spirit of the gospel, and if it leaves us without precise guidance as to how we are to administer the rite, this can cause us perplexity or distress only if we are not yet fully emancipated from a legalistic habit of mind. How shall he who has received the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost, poured out upon him richly by Jesus

⁹S. J. Baird, *The Great Baptizer; A Bible History of Baptism*, 1882, p. 451.

¹⁰*Epistle lxi. 12-14* (Hartel's ed. 1871, p. 760; E. T. in *Ante-Nicene Library*. Am. ed., V. 401).

Christ his Saviour, be solicitous, in publicly announcing this his great experience by means of an appropriate rite, how the symbolical water should be applied to his person? So only he sets forth openly that he is "washed," shall he not be satisfied? And may he not fitly remember the proverb with which our Lord once instructed one of his disciples: "He that has been washed [really *washed*, all over] has no need to lave [the reference is to bathing only a portion of the person]—except his feet"?

It may meanwhile be worth while to make clear to ourselves the little concernment the New Testament takes with the mode of baptism. It is much understating the matter to say that it does not prescribe a mode of baptism. It does not even suggest one mode as preferable perhaps to another. It does not so describe any instance of baptism as to show interest in how it was performed, or to tempt us to look upon it as an example having normative value. It does not, indeed, in any of its allusions to baptism, make it unambiguously clear exactly how it was administered. In a word, not only can we not discover in the New Testament any authoritative directions for the right performance of the rite, but it is impossible to be quite sure precisely how the acts of baptism alluded to in the New Testament were performed. He who goes to the New Testament, therefore, in the hope of obtaining exact information as to how to baptize, is doomed to a quick disappointment. And he who affirms of any particular way of baptizing that it, and it alone, is valid baptism, has an immense burden of proof resting on his shoulders. He can produce no justification of his affirmation from the New Testament, in the way either of express assertion, or authoritative example, or unambiguous implication. And is it not a sound Protestant principle that only the Holy Spirit speaking in the Scriptures has the right authoritatively to order the things of the house of God?

Perhaps the place occupied by baptism in general in the New Testament is commonly exaggerated. It is not a subject on which the New Testament greatly enlarges. This does not prove that it is of little importance. But it does seem to show that there are few details concerning it which are of large importance. The New Testament considers it enough to establish it as the initiatory rite of Christianity, outline its significance in broad touches, and let it go at that. The terms "baptize," "baptism" occur, no

doubt, with some frequency, in the pages of the New Testament.¹¹ But in a large number of these occurrences the reference is to the baptism of John the Baptist; in some others, to the Jewish lustrations; and in yet others the terms are used metaphorically. Comparatively few are left to refer to Christian baptism. There is but one mention of the Christian rite of baptism in the Gospels.¹² This occurs in the "great commission" (Matt. xxviii. 19), in which the risen Lord sends forth his followers to make disciples of all the nations, incidentally adding that the disciples, when made, were to be baptized and instructed. In the book of Acts the baptism of Christian converts is currently mentioned—some ten instances occur in all¹³—but little is added to the mere notice of its administration. Then there are about the same number of allusions to baptism in the Epistles, chiefly in the Epistles of Paul; but these allusions are always incidental, and baptism is never mentioned for its own sake.¹⁴ This is the entire material with which the New Testament supplies us with reference to the ordinance. The few passing allusions to it in passages where it is not named are not such as largely to advance our knowledge of it.¹⁵

What we are now to take note of is that in no one of this meager list of New Testament allusions to the Christian rite of baptism is there any prescription, recommendation, description, or even clear intimation of the mode in which the rite was to be, or was, administered. In the sole allusion to baptism made by our Lord (Matt. xxviii. 19), he simply commands that those gained to him by the preaching of his followers should be baptized "with reference to the name of the Father, and of the Son,

¹¹The verb, seventy-four times; the noun, in its two forms, twenty-three times.

¹²Mark xvi. 16 occurs in the spurious conclusion of Mark.

¹³Acts ii. 38, 41; viii. 12, 13, 16, 36, 38; ix. 18; x. 47, 48; xv. 15, 33; xviii. 8; xix. 5; xxii. 16.

¹⁴Rom. vi. 3, 4; I Cor. i. 13-17; xii. 13; xv. 29; Gal. iii. 27; Eph. iv. 5; Col. ii. 12; Heb. vi. 10; I Pet. iii. 21.

¹⁵This would not be quite true if we could admit allusions to baptism in John iii. 5; Eph. v. 20; Tit. iii. 5; I Cor. vi. 11; Heb. x. 22 [Rev. i. 5]. This, however, we can by no means do. John iii. 5 was spoken before Christian baptism was instituted; and the "washing" of the other passages has no reference to the rite of baptism, concerning which this word is never employed in the New Testament (Acts xxii. 16 is no exception).

and of the Holy Ghost," and adds absolutely not one word more on the subject. In all the ten accounts of baptizings in Acts, there is not a single description of the mode of its administration, nor even an incidental suggestion from which it may be confidently inferred how the baptism was performed.

Appeal has been made, it is true, to the graphic narrative of the baptizing of the Ethiopian chamberlain (Acts viii. 36 ff) as implying immersion: "And they both went down into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And . . . they came up out of the water." That they went down (from the chariot) into the water for the baptizing is no proof, however, that the baptizing was by immersion. There are other modes of baptizing besides immersion, which can be administered only in the water. Affusion on the head of a recipient standing in shallow water, for instance, is the ordinary mode of baptism depicted in the early decorations of the Roman catacombs,¹⁸ and it is more probable that it was this mode which was employed in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch (and in the baptisms of John the Baptist) than immersion. The situation and character of this "water," met with in the desert (of which we know nothing), may indeed have made it more convenient to enter the water for baptism in any mode, even that of sprinkling. The plain fact is that we are told nothing in this passage of the manner in which baptism was administered; we are only told of certain circumstances accompanying it, from which we can infer that immersion would be possible—provided the "water" was large enough and deep enough, and other circumstances of which we are told nothing concurred to make it suitable.

If we knew otherwise that immersion was the customary mode of baptism in the Apostolic Church, we should naturally infer that Philip and the eunuch went down into the water in order to immersion: in our actual situation of entire ignorance of how the Apostolic Church baptized, there is no ground for this inference. And this is the sole hint given us in any of the accounts of baptism, which even to this extent suggests an inference of immersion as the mode of administration. On the other hand, appeal has been made to the account of the baptism of

¹⁸The whole subject of the archæology of baptism is carefully discussed by C. F. Rogers in *Studia Biblica et Ecclesiastica*, Vol. V., Part 4: Oxford, 1903.

Cornelius (Acts x. 47, 48) as implying baptism with a small quantity of water: "Can any one withhold water, that these should not be baptized?" Certainly the question would be very natural if the water was to be brought. The inference is, however, scarcely stringent; and similarly, though it seems on the face of it unlikely that there were facilities for immersion in the Philippian jail, or that the immense number of converts on Pentecost were all immersed, these are not things that could be insisted upon were there reason to believe that immersion was actually employed. It remains true, therefore, that the accounts in Acts supply no data for confident conclusions as to the mode of baptism which was in use. When we have duly weighed every possible hint in them, we find ourselves still without knowledge.

Nor is it different with the allusions in the Epistles. Those who have been accustomed to think of baptism in the mode of immersion have, it is true, always not unnaturally seen that mode of baptizing alluded to in Rom. vi. 3, 4, Col. ii. 12, where we are said to be buried with Christ through or in baptism. There is no allusion in these passages, however, to the manner in which baptism was administered, as if by the very action the burial of the Christian with Christ, and his rising again with him (though this rising again is probably not connected with baptism in either passage), were visibly enacted in symbol. It is the spiritual experience of one who is in Christ Jesus which is adverted to, and baptism is mentioned only as the outward act by which the union of the soul with Christ is marked. Whoever has become united to Christ by that faith which is confessed in baptism, has ideally shared his death and resurrection (Rom. vi. 8, 9); he can say: "When Christ died it was my death. He died, and I died with him; he lay in the tomb for me, and I lay therefore buried there with him; and in his rising again, I, too, rose again to God." It is of this great spiritual fact that Paul is speaking in Rom. vi. 3, 4 and Col. ii. 12, and he has no more reference to the mode of administering baptism in these passages than he has in Gal. iii. 27, where he refers to the same great fact under another figure. "As many of you as were baptized with reference to Christ," he there exclaims, "did put on Christ." Does he imply that baptism was administered after a fashion which visibly symbolized changing one's clothes? As little in the passages now before us does he

imply that baptism was administered after a fashion which visibly symbolized burial with Christ. He only asserts that every baptized person professes to be a participant in the death and burial and rising again of his Lord.

Indeed, the introduction of the symbolism of the external rite of baptism into the thought of these passages throws each of them into confusion. In one of them (Col. ii. 12) Paul is expressly engaged in warning his readers against permitting themselves to be drawn off into attaching importance to external ordinances. They had Christ: all the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ; and those who have Christ have in him everything. Why, then, should they be circumcised? They have already in Christ everything that circumcision stands for,—“seeing that they have been buried with him in baptism,” “in whom also they have been raised again through faith in the working of God who raised him from the dead.” Is it possible to take this “burial in baptism” of the external symbol? Is it not necessarily the spiritual fact which is thus adduced? The other passage (Rom. vi. 3 ff) is plainer still. “Or, know ye not that whosoever of us were baptized with reference to Christ Jesus,—it was with reference to *his death* that we were baptized? We were buried, then, with him through”—what? Baptism? No. But “through this baptism *with reference to his death.*” It is only by thus formally establishing a connection between baptism and the death of Christ, that Paul establishes a connection between baptism and burial with Christ. This he even labors to accomplish. Our baptism had special reference to *the death* of Christ, he argues, proclaiming a “blood theology”; and if it had thus special reference to *the death* of Christ, so that we may claim that he died for us and we therefore died with him,—we may say we were buried with him in this baptism which has been shown to have special reference to his death. Why should he make all this roundabout argument to connect our baptism with Christ’s burial, if baptism in its very mode of administration was vocal with this connection? Is it not quite clear that Paul did not presuppose in his readers,—or, indeed, hold for himself,—a view of the external symbolism of the act of baptism which saw in it burial with Christ and resurrection with him vividly enacted in object lesson? We are not saying that we can learn from this passage that baptism was not

to Paul an immersion. We are saying that we cannot learn from this passage that baptism was to Paul an immersion. He is not appealing in it to the symbolism of the external rite; so far from implying that the symbolism of the external rite was burial and resurrection with Christ, he clearly betrays that he knew of no such symbolism in it. He is appealing to the great spiritual fact which is signified by baptism, under one of the favorite figurative modes of expression by which he was wont to speak of it. The outcome is that we can learn nothing from these passages of how baptism was administered by Paul and his fellows. And that means, to put it briefly, that the New Testament nowhere either prescribes or suggests to us how this rite is to be administered; and nowhere does it even allude to the rite in such a way as to supply ground for a confident inference as to its mode of administration.

No doubt this complete silence of the New Testament on the mode of baptism is due in part to the absence of all need to instruct its original readers on such a matter. Everybody in the circles primarily addressed by the New Testament writers knew perfectly well how baptism was accustomed to be administered by the apostles and their helpers. The mere mention of baptism was enough for them; from their own daily experience they would supply all the details of the customary ceremony. We can scarcely suppose, however, that if great importance had been attached to some particular method of administering the ordinance, it would have been possible for the New Testament writers to allude to it cursorily and never drop a hint from which this important, perhaps indispensable, element in its administration could be inferred. That no such hints have been dropped seems to imply that no great importance was attached to the externals of the rite, that the great things about it were the things of which hints have been dropped, to use no stronger language,—its ethical and spiritual significance. And meanwhile the effect of the failure—if we may call it that—of the New Testament writers, in their allusions to baptism, to drop any hint of how it should be administered, has been for us (whatever it may have been for their first readers) that we are left in ignorance of how they baptized and of how they would have us baptize. If any real importance does attach to the way in which the rite is administered; if any especial mode of ad-

ministering it is essential to its validity, integrity, reality (call it what you will)—we are left not only without intimation of this fact, but in the very unhappy condition of never being sure we are administering the rite validly, in its integrity, reality, because wholly without information of what that mode of administering it is which is necessary to its validity, integrity, reality. The natural inference surely is that the silence of the New Testament writers as to the proper mode of administering the rite means that they attached no great importance to the mode of administering it, but that their interest in the rite lay elsewhere.

Of course it is easy to say that the New Testament writers did not need to prescribe or intimate the mode in which baptism should be administered,—because that service is performed by the term itself. We are told that the baptism instituted by our Lord was not a new thing invented by him, and needing to be described elaborately in its mode of administration. It was adopted from the baptism of John the Baptist, who had himself adapted it from earlier rites, and, in its mode of administration, it of course followed John's method of administering it. We may therefore learn from John's baptism how Christian baptism should be performed. The command to "baptize" carries with it the command to do what "baptizing" was known to be—in John's hands. Moreover (so we are told), the very term employed—"baptize"—has a perfectly definite meaning, and itself conveys all the information needed to secure its proper administration. We have but to do the thing which our Lord told his followers to do when he instructed them to "baptize," and we shall find ourselves in possession of a perfectly definite mode of baptism, varying from which we cease to "baptize."

How, then, did John baptize, if we are to get our method of baptizing from him? And what is that mode of baptism which is intimated to us by the very term itself? When we seriously face these questions we find ourselves as much in the dark as before. In plain fact we do not know precisely how John baptized; and the term "baptize" does not bring us any trustworthy intimation of its mode.

Certainly, in the accounts that have come down to us of his baptizing there are no detailed descriptions of how John performed the rite. And any incidental hints which may occur in

the narratives from which we may fancy the manner of his baptizing may be inferred, are both few and quite inconclusive. They amount merely to intimations (1) that John chose places for administering his baptism where there was abundance of water: "all the region round about Jordan" (Luke iii. 3), or Enon, "because there were many waters there" (John iii. 23); and (2) an occasional ambiguous use of prepositions which may be pressed to imply immersion. Abundance of water might be needed, however, even though immersion was not practiced: much water was required, for example, for baptism by pouring on the head of a recipient standing in the water—a mode of baptism certainly very anciently in vogue. Might not abundance of water, indeed, be desirable for places in which crowds assembled, even if it were not necessary for the purposes of baptism itself? Who can tell whether the "many waters" at Enon were of size and depth sufficient to allow true immersion, or were otherwise convenient for the rite? When we read, as we do in two instances (Matt. iii. 6, Mark i. 5) that "John baptized in the river Jordan," we naturally think of his taking the recipient into the water for the purpose; and this impression is strengthened by the occurrence in one passage (Mark i. 9) of a phrase which is rendered in our Revised Version, "baptized into the Jordan." But this latter phrase may just as well be rendered "in Jordan" and so conformed to the other passages; or it may be equally well rendered "at Jordan," as it is rendered (for example) in Acts xxi. 13 "at Jerusalem"; and it is, after all, just as easy to baptize a man "in Jordan" by affusion as by immersion. Nothing is really gained by overpressing the implications of prepositions which were, in point of fact, employed very flexibly at the stage of the development of the Greek language when the New Testament was a-writing.¹⁷ If we insist that, because the phrase which, in the strictness of the original implication of the preposition, means to "come up out of the water," occurs in Mark i. 10 (cf. Acts viii. 36), we must sup-

¹⁷For a good account of the use of these prepositions in New Testament Greek, consult Blass, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, E. T. 1891, p. 122. Conybeare and Stock, *Selections from the Septuagint*, 1905, p. 80, illustrate the LXX. usage. Perhaps the closest parallel to Mark i. 9 in the New Testament is John ix. 7: "Go, wash at the pool of Siloam," where the preposition designates merely the place at which the washing was to be done, the washing of the eyes only being in question.

pose that the persons so spoken of were in the water, why not equally insist that, because in the parallel passage, Matt. iii. 16, the preposition occurs which says only that "they came away from the water," we must suppose that the person spoken of was not in the water? If we read that John's baptism was "in water," we cannot fail to remember that this expression may just as well be rendered "with water," and that it is actually interchanged with the simple "with water" in parallel passages, and that in such a manner as to show that Matthew and John prefer "in water" and Mark and Luke "with water,"—that is to say, the difference is merely a matter of style.¹⁸ In a word, there are no materials here on the ground by which a confident decision can be reached as to how John baptized; all that we are told of his baptizing would fall readily in with more than one conjecture as to its mode. We may form an opinion of our own in the matter, which may be more or less plausible; but a dogmatic conclusion which we can impose on others as authoritative determination of fact cannot be attained. Even if we were sure, then, that Christian baptism must needs follow that of John in mode—and of that we are far from sure—we could not learn from the notices of John's baptism how we should baptize.

Shall we fall back, then, entirely upon the intrinsic implications of the term itself? What are the intrinsic implications of the term itself? It has certainly been widely customary to say they are those of immersion; and this has even sometimes been sharpened into the assertion that the command to baptize is nothing but a direct command to immerse,—“baptize” means “immerse,” and when we are told to “baptize” we are just told to “immerse” and nothing else. This contention rests, however, upon a complete misapprehension of the philological facts.

It is quite true that the primitive root, to which the word “baptize” goes back, bears the sense of “to be deep”; and that the primary verb from which “baptize” is immediately formed has as its fundamental meaning “to dip,” from which it advances, however, to express such secondary ideas as “moistening,” “washing,” “dyeing,” “tempering,” “imbuing,” without the least implication that these effects have been produced by “dipping.” It is even em-

¹⁸“In water,” Matt. iii. 11, John i. 26, 31, 33; “with water,” Mark i. 8, Luke iii. 16, Acts i. 5, xi. 16.

ployed to express the "imbuing" of the mind with certain states—of course without any implication of "dipping,"—as, for example, when we read of one "imbued with righteousness to his very depths," that is to say, taking all his color and temper from righteousness. "Baptize" is formed from this primary verb by the addition of a termination (represented in its English form by the syllable "-ize") which gives it a frequentative or intensive meaning. It might take its starting point in any one of the senses—primary or secondary—of the verb from which it is formed. It might very well, therefore, mean originally "to dip," or "to moisten," or "to cleanse," or "to dye," and the like,—only not "to dip," "to cleanse," and the like, simply, but, in accordance with the implications of its form, "to dip" or "to cleanse," and the rest, *repeatedly* or *effectually*, the emphasis falling, of course, in contrast with its primitive, on this added idea. In its usage it was rather an intensive than a frequentative verb, and in point of fact its common meaning in profane Greek is "to overwhelm," whether literally or metaphorically. "Baptized" ships are sunken ships; "baptized" sailors are drowned; cities are "baptized" in sleep; men are "baptized" with cares or debts, or with wine, so that "baptized" came to mean "drunken." The word does not occur, however, in this its common classical sense in the New Testament,—unless we interpret from it the somewhat enigmatical use of it in Mark x. 38, 39, Luke xii. 50. It appears in the New Testament in a somewhat special sense, developed by Jewish tongues on the basis of the numerous lustrations required by the Jewish law, by which it came to mean just "to cleanse," "to purify." As the classical usage had taken its start from the idea of dipping effectually—with the effect, namely, of destroying, and so the word had come to express the idea of overwhelming without any implication of the process by which the overwhelming was accomplished; so the Jewish usage had taken its start from the idea of dipping effectually—with the effect of cleansing, and so the word had come to express the idea of purifying without any implication of the process by which the purification was wrought.

"Baptize," in other words, in the New Testament, expresses the single idea of purification, and does not connote any mode of the application of the water for the production of this purifi-

cation. The notion of "dipping," which lay in the background of the development of the term, had passed as fully out of sight as the notion of a specifically *evening* meal has passed out of sight when we speak currently of the Lord's Supper, or the notion of *age* when we speak of the elders of the Church. "Baptism" appears on the pages of the New Testament just as the technical word for ceremonial purification, and does not contain in it any implication of the method by which this purification is wrought.

The process by which the word "baptize," as the technical term for ritual purification, displaced the word for "washing," which is employed of the Jewish lustrations in the Greek Old Testament, cannot be traced in detail for lack of material. It was in itself, however, a natural replacement to make. The implication which the intensive form, "baptize," bore of the efficacy of the "washing" for the object in view, gave the word an advantage over all other terms for designating ceremonial purification. In any event, the substitution was complete by the time the New Testament was written. In the Apocryphal books and in the New Testament—Ecclus. xxxiv. (xxxv.) 25 (30), Mark vii. 4, Luke vi. 38, Heb. ix. 10—it is the standing term for the Jewish lustrations; and the designation of John's purificatory rite as a "baptizing," and of himself, its proclaimer, as, by way of eminence, "the baptizer," bears vivid testimony to the establishment of the term in its new sense. It is clear that, at this epoch, when men thought of a lustration which cleansed, they thought of it under the special designation of a "baptism." This was the "laving" which was effectual for the end in view. The broad language of Heb. ix. 10 in adverting to the lustrations of the law—"divers baptizings"—already brings us a suggestion of the width of the connotation of the term: however the Jewish lustrations were performed, they were all "baptizings." This is the term accordingly that is employed for the lustrations customary among the Jews before eating (Luke xi. 38, 39), by which are meant (according to Mark vii. 3 ff) either the mere bathing of the hands (which was performed by affusion) or the "sprinkling" (for "sprinkling" is the right reading in Mark vii. 4, for which its synonym "baptizing" has been substituted by some copyist) of the person. Mark adds (vii. 4) that the

Jews were accustomed to "baptize" also their (wooden) cups and pots and their brazen vessels,—surely not always by immersing them; and some old copyist, who is at any rate a witness to the usage of his time, adds "couches" to the list, to immerse which would, of course, be out of the question, despite the mediæval suggestion of Maimonides that "beds" (not quite the same thing) may be immersed in sections!

Possibly the most striking indication of the extension of the word to all modes of purification, however, is found outside the limits of the New Testament, in one of those few passages in which what is its settled usage in the New Testament crops out earlier. In the Apocryphal book of *Ecclesiasticus*, xxxiv. (xxxv.) 25 (30), there is a warning against playing fast and loose with the laws of purification. When one became unclean by contact with a dead body, it was provided that he should be sprinkled with "the water of separation" on the third and on the seventh day, whereafter he should "wash his clothes and bathe himself with water" (Num. xix. 11, 19). Apparently the sprinkling with "the water of separation" was to cleanse him from the pollution of the dead body, and the bath, to cleanse him from the uncleanness which the "water of separation" seems to have brought upon all who were concerned with it (Num. xix. 1-22). Now what the Son of Sirach declares is that if any one, after having had "the water of separation" sprinkled upon him, touches the corpse again, he cannot profit by the subsequent bath. This is the language in which he does this: "He that is baptized from a dead body and touches it again, what availeth his washing?" What, in other words, is the use of his proceeding to the bath, if he has defiled himself again after the sprinkling? The act of purification from the dead body, which was by sprinkling, is here distinguished, as a "baptism," from the subsequent bath, which is designated, in accordance with the usage of the Greek Old Testament, a "washing." "Baptism," of course, does not mean "sprinkling" here; but it is freely used of a purifying rite which was performed by "sprinkling." That is to say, it bears a sense wide enough to be used of all rites of purification, with entire indifference as to the mode of their performance; and the command to "baptize" is therefore not just a command to immerse, and would not have been understood as a command to

immerse. There is in the term no intrinsic implication of any mode of applying the water, and we are left by the New Testament accordingly without any instruction as to how we are to baptize.¹⁹

How, then, are we to baptize? Lacking definite instruction from the New Testament, and even clear example, it is obvious that we are thrown back upon the nature of the ordinance itself to suggest an appropriate mode of administering it, under the great law of decency and order. Baptism is, first of all, a symbolical rite; and its symbolism, naturally, should be the prime consideration in its mode of administration. By the washing of the body with water it represents the washing of the soul from sin in the blood of Christ. The first law of its administration is, therefore, that it shall be a washing. It is true, it has been common from an early date to insist upon another symbolism for it. In it, it is said, we are buried with Christ and rise again with him; and it is, therefore, to be so administered as to set forth this, its great lesson. To men accustomed to see baptism administered by immersion it has no doubt been not unnatural to interpret Rom. vi. 3 ff., Col. ii. 12, as suggesting such a symbolism for the rite. It has already been pointed out, however, that this is a manifest misinterpretation of these passages; and outside of them no support can be found in Scripture for attributing such a symbolism to it. Throughout Scripture, baptism is, in its external nature, just a cleansing, washing, symbolizing the cleansing of the soul by the blood of Christ. It is the gospel of salvation, pictured forth in significant action,—the “congealed Word.” He who receives it, by that act confesses himself a sinner in need of salvation; recognizes full provision for that salvation in the blood of Christ; and in vivid object lesson represents this salvation as taking effect on him. It is not a mere part of the saving process which baptism symbolizes,—not merely what we currently call “regeneration,” for example; nor merely the cleansing of the soul from the pollution of sin, or its power, as distinguished from its guilt—the “subjective side” of salvation; but the whole of salvation, conceived as a cleansing,—a cleansing

¹⁹The word accordingly appears in recently discovered Papyri, Christian and heathen alike, in the simple sense of ceremonial cleansing (cf. Moulton and Milligan, *The Expositor*, VII. vi., p. 377).

from at once the guilt and the pollution and the power of sin. The two sacraments symbolize, not different parts or elements of salvation, but each the entirety of salvation, under its own particular figure. What distinguishes baptism from its companion sacrament is just that it symbolizes salvation as a cleansing; and therefore, we say, it should be so administered as vividly to set forth the act of cleansing.

In the symbolical rites of the Old Testament, cleansing is symbolized, now by a complete bath, now by affusion, now by sprinkling; and the symbolical rites of the Old Testament are not only our divine text-book in religious symbolism, from which we rightly derive instruction in the art, but they actually determined the form which the symbolical rites of the New Testament took. We are clearly within the bounds of decency and order when we follow their suggestions. Some, under the tutelage of passages like Ezek. xxxvi. 25, may consider the act of sprinkling the most significant possible symbol of the cleansing signified by baptism. Others, influenced by such passages as Joel ii. 28, may see in the act of pouring a more appropriate method of showing forth a cleansing the active agent in producing which is the Holy Spirit. Others still may prefer immersion as more fully picturing the completeness of the cleansing signified. Each of us may legitimately exercise his own preference, and within the limits set by the essential symbolism of cleansing, give effect to it in act. But surely no one, in the actual state of the case, is entitled to insist that his own preference must be adopted by all, on pain of being pronounced disobedient to the command of God and disregarding of the sacramental action which God has appointed.

So narrow an attitude with reference to the administration of this sacrament is a novelty of the modern Church; throughout the whole history of the ancient Church, the validity of baptism in more modes than one was never widely questioned. And oddly enough, the mode of baptism in the interest of which this narrow attitude has been taken up is itself a novelty of the modern Church. Certainly never in the ancient Church, and, for all that appears, never before the middle of the seventeenth century, was it customary to baptize by laying fully clothed recipients down on their backs in the water. But perhaps the oddest thing of all about this strange attitude of precisian scrupulos-

ity in so slender a circumstantial of the sacrament of cleansing as the mode of applying the water in the symbolical bath. is that it is taken up by a body of Christians who show no tendency to such rigor in the minutiae of ritual detail in any other department of worship,—who, for example, do not insist, in administering the sister sacrament, on anxiously preserving its character as specifically an *evening* meal (in accordance with its New Testament designation)⁸⁰; on receiving it always in a reclining attitude (as its first recipients received it); or even on administering it with unleavened bread (with which it was undoubtedly instituted). Surely this diverse dealing with the two sacraments is a mystery of inequality. Meanwhile those who have been called into freedom may safely go on their way and keep themselves clear of ordinances of men in the sacraments of our Lord's appointment, holding fast the Head, and publishing steadfastly the gospel of his salvation at once in the spoken Word and in the pictorial representations of the sacraments of his blood.

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⁸⁰Charles Chauncey, second President of Harvard College (1654-1672), was more consistent. He insisted both that baptism should be by immersion, and that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated only in the evening. (Winthrop's *Journal*, ed. 1853, i., pp. 397-399; ii., pp. 86, 87.

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENTS.

I. THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS ON THE CONTRIBUTED ARTICLES.

I.

A NEW ESTIMATE OF THE THEOLOGICAL SITUATION.

By Professor O. A. Curtis.

PROFESSOR OLIN A. CURTIS is a native of Maine, where he was born in 1850. He took his academic course in Lawrence University and his theological course in Boston University, graduating in 1880. For the next three years he was pastor of the Methodist Church in Janesville, Wis., and the following three years at Milwaukee. He afterwards studied at the German Universities of Leipzig, Erlangen, and Marburg and for a while at the University of Edinburgh. He was Professor of Systematic Theology in Boston University for six years, and has been Professor of Theology in Drew Seminary since 1896. He has written a work on Systematic Theology entitled *The Christian Faith*. He had the rare privilege of being, while in Germany, a pupil of the great Ritschl himself, and of Hermann also. He is one of the ablest men in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Those who read enough to keep up with the times are aware of the present unsettled state of theological thought. Many men are in a state of perplexity and know neither what they believe nor what they ought to believe. It is in view of this state of theological uncertainty and spiritual unrest that Dr. Curtis has made the study of the situation which he gives us in this number of the REVIEW. Most of us—being unlearned and plain people—have not a sufficiently comprehensive knowledge of the elements that enter into the complex situation to enable us to construct a net estimate of it. Few of us, indeed, have even the means of securing that knowledge. And even if we had, there would still be lacking in most of us the intellectual grasp and power to discriminate, classify, generalize, and digest all this manifold material so as to arrive at a just interpretation and estimate of the whole. Dr. Curtis, who has exceptional qualifications for it, has done the work for us. In his résumé he gives a brief review of all the great thinkers and the great books of recent years with their setting and perspective, and an estimate of the contribution

ing, *The Seeming Unreality of the Spiritual Life, The Ethics of Jesus*. Through these books he has become known throughout this country and in Europe. He is now engaged in writing a book for an English publishing house. He is in great demand also as a lecturer. At the last session of the Vanderbilt Preachers' Institute he was the prime favorite, and literally captured everybody from the venerable Dean down to the Editor of this REVIEW.

The REVIEW thinks itself highly favored indeed in being able to secure for its readers this paper from the pen of Dr. King. There is in it a tacit assumption of the intellectual uncertainty and the spiritual unrest that are characteristic of our time. But however real, widespread, and deep these may be, there are certain facts that remain, the same yesterday, to-day, forever. Whatever theories men may hold or deny, these facts abide, unshaken and undeniable. Professor King does not say that these are all. But they are the irreducible minimum of impregnable moral and spiritual truth, which no man who has ethical sanity and self-respect can decline to face and reckon with. The person who does so decline is by that very fact convicted of being destitute of both.

Dr. King not only enumerates and briefly elaborates these fundamental and changeless facts, he presses them on the conscience and compels the reader to face the question as to whether he is facing these facts or dodging them like a coward. He infuses a spirit of intense earnestness into the appeal, which makes it vibrant and vital, so that, when the reader finishes it, he feels that he has been in the grip of powers that belong to some higher sphere and order.

To undertake to give here a synopsis of the contents of the paper might serve only to lessen the force of the facts and the effect of the immediate impact of their searching appeal.

III.

HOW SHALL WE BAPTIZE?

By Dr. B. B. Warfield.

DR. WARFIELD is one of the illustrious sons of Kentucky who have helped to make Kentucky illustrious. He was born at Lexington in 1851. He took his college course at Princeton, and graduated in the Princeton Theological Seminary in 1876. He was a student in the University of Leipzig in 1876-7. For eight years, 1879-87, he was Professor of New Testament Language and Literature in the Western Theological Seminary at Pittsburg, Pa. From 1887 to the present he has been Professor of Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary. But through his books and his contributions to Dictionaries, Encyclopedias, Reviews, magazines, and newspapers, he has

become a theological teacher in general to the theological students and teachers of the whole country and of other countries.

At the repeated request of the Editor of this REVIEW, Dr. Warfield has contributed an article on the much discussed subject of the Mode of Baptism, which, for breadth, sanity, and thoroughness, is the best treatment anywhere to be found in the same space, so far as this writer is aware.

The keynote of Dr. Warfield's paper is the broad simplicity which characterizes the New Testament allusions to the rite. The gospel dispensation is not a legal dispensation with its minute enactments and its precise requirements, and we should not, as Paul says, wish to subject ourselves to external ordinances from which the gospel has forever set us free. The New Testament does not concern itself greatly with externalities, least of all, with the mere incidentals of externalities. *It does not prescribe a particular mode of baptism.* It does not in any of its allusions to baptism *make it unambiguously clear* exactly by what mode it was administered; and it is *impossible* to be *altogether sure* precisely how the acts of baptism alluded to in the New Testament were performed. The New Testament considers it enough to indicate that baptism was the external initiatory rite of Christianity, outline its significance in broad touches, and leave it.

In some of the instances where the terms "baptize," "baptism," etc., occur, the reference is to the baptism of John the Baptist; in some others, to the Jewish washings; in others, the terms are used metaphorically; and a few they refer to Christian baptism. Dr. Warfield takes up those instances where the baptism of John is referred to and shows that there are no detailed descriptions which make it indubitably clear how he performed the rite. Further, he considers each instance of John's baptism and shows that the inferences that have been drawn from them in favor of immersion are not well founded. He does the same for those instances where the allusion is to the Christian rite of baptism: that in Matthew xxviii. 19, and the ten accounts of baptizing in the Acts of the Apostles, particularly, the case of the Ethiopian eunuch, that of Cornelius and his household, that of the Philippian jailer, and that of the multitude on the day of Pentecost.

In the next place, he discusses the use of the terms "baptize" and "baptism" in the Epistles. Here, of course, he takes up the classic passage in Romans vi. 3, 4, and the parallel reference in Colossians ii. 12. He maintains that there is no allusion in these passages to the manner in which baptism was administered.

It is the spiritual experience of one who is in Christ Jesus, and baptism is mentioned only as the outward act by which the union of the soul with Christ is marked: Whosoever has become united to Christ by that faith which is confessed in baptism, has ideally shared his death and resurrection. Paul has no more reference to the mode of baptism in these passages than he has in Galatians iii. 27, where he refers to the same great [spiritual] fact under another figure: "As many of you as were baptized into Christ, did put on Christ." Can he here mean that baptism was administered after a mode which visibly symbolized *changing one's clothes*? As little does he imply in the passages in Romans and Colossians that baptism was administered after a fashion which symbolized burial with Christ.

In a sermon to the unconverted which he preached in Louisville some years before his death, Dr. Broadus, Professor of New Testament Greek in the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, said:

If I had waited until I understood every part of the Bible, I fear I might myself still be among the unsaved to-night. For instance, there is the sixth chapter of Romans, which my learned brethren understand to refer to water baptism. But I freely confess that, after being a Bible student over fifty years, I still do not know whether it means water baptism or not. But shall I for this reason give up my hope of salvation?

He was preaching on the reasons which men give for not becoming Christians, one of which was that they did not understand the Bible; and he was showing the folly of waiting till they did understand it—there were parts of it which he himself did not yet understand.

To sum up, then, the New Testament does not describe, or even allude to, the rite of baptism in such a way as to supply ground for a confident inference as to its mode of administration.

But what about the word itself? Does not the Greek word, βαπτίζω, mean to "immerse"? And does not that settle the whole question? This phase of the subject, which in most discussions is put first and foremost, Dr. Warfield, with a fine sagacity, leaves to the last, that having disposed of all minor questions he may now address himself to the main question? Any partial synopsis of this masterly study of the philology of the term would be unfair and misleading, while a full reproduction of all its points would require more space than can now be given. But it seems to us that Dr. Warfield's study of βαπτίζω, while comparatively brief, covers the ground in a very satisfactory way. And that is saying a great deal.

Think of it, gentle reader, will you?—an article which, in a quite limited space, practically settles the meaning of that one word, that pregnant and portentous word, which has stirred up controversies, arrayed scholars in hostile camps, divided communities, estranged

friends, differentiated Churches, and given more trouble and worry and work to Professors of New Testament Greek and religious editors than all others!

The solicitude and scrupulosity of those who contend so earnestly that immersion is the mode of baptism, and the only mode, are inconsistent with their attitude of indifference touching the details of administration in the case of the other sacrament. They show no inclination to such rigor in the incidentals of ritual detail in the administration of the Lord's Supper. They do not insist on observing it in a reclining posture, though they know that its first recipients received it so. They do not insist on the use of unleavened bread in the observance of it, though they know that it was instituted with unleavened bread. They do not insist on observing it as an evening meal, though they know that that would be in accordance with the New Testament name of it. That is to say, while they ignore *several* items in detail *which they know* were observed in the original institution and New Testament administration of one sacrament, they insist with unyielding scrupulosity and tenacity on the observance of *one* external detail in the administration of the other sacrament *which they do not know, and cannot know*, to have been practiced in New Testament times.

The scripturalness, the sanity, and the sweet reasonableness of Dr. Warfield's view of the question will commend it to those who have read and comprehended his article—namely, that in view of our unrelievable ignorance of the New Testament mode of administering baptism, and of the freedom which Christians have in matters of external detail, we are left at liberty to use the mode—whether immersion, pouring, or sprinkling—which in our judgment best symbolizes the spiritual reality which water baptism is intended to represent.

IV.

HORACE BUSHNELL.

By James Mudge.

FOLLOWING the oft announced plan of the REVIEW to give studies of great preachers by competent writers, we present in this number what it has been a long cherished hope with us to give, a story of the man whose influence has been greater, as thinker, theologian, and preacher, in the history of American Christianity, than perhaps that of any other, not excepting Edwards or Beecher. The study is contributed at the request of the REVIEW by our old friend and always welcome contributor, Dr. James Mudge, himself a New Englander and an enthusiastic appreciator of Dr. Bushnell.