

COMMUNICATIONS.

Letter No. 8.

To Mr. Thomas Hopkins, Superintendent of St. Peter's Sunday School, Verulam.

DEAR SIR,—

In the XXVII. Article of Religion the Church of England declares that "The baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained in the Church, as most agreeable to the institution of Christ." The Church offers no proof, leaving that to her individual members as occasion may arise. It has been my object so far in these letters to give proofs of the scriptural nature of infant baptism. I come now to speak of the manner of administering baptism. Neither our Lord nor His apostles have left any definite direction for the administration of baptism, farther than the use of water and the words of institution. Three modes have been used in the Church as lawful from a very early age:

1. Immersion, dipping or plunging.
2. Affusion, or pouring.
3. Aspersio, or sprinkling.

Dipping and pouring are indifferently used by the Church of England, but she does not use sprinkling, although it is as lawful and efficacious as the other two, and, perhaps, more so. For the thing signified by baptism is frequently, in scripture, set forth by sprinkling or pouring water, but never, that I remember, by dipping. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty."—Isa. 44, 3. "He shall sprinkle many nations."—Isa. 52, 3. This prediction or promise, which many think refers to the ordinance of baptism, seems to be particularly fulfilled in our Lord's commission to make disciples of all nations, by baptizing them. And again: "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you." Here we see that the quantity of water used is not of the essence of the ordinance, but the use of some water is necessary. If baptism were "the putting away of the filth of the flesh," which the apostle declares it is not, then would the quantity of water be a very important factor in its administration; but it is "the answer of good conscience toward God, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." And in the improvement of our baptism we are said to be "sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water."—Heb. 10, 22. And as we have seen before, sprinkling is a cleansing mode of washing. "And that which is signified by the laver of regeneration, is the renewing of the Holy Ghost which is shed (or poured out) on us."—Titus 3, 5, 6. And the blood of Christ is called the blood of sprinkling.—Heb. 12, 24.

The word "baptize" has in Scripture so great a breadth of meaning, that it cannot be used to support any one mode of administering the rite, to the prejudice of the rest. From this, therefore, nothing can be proved either way. The rapidly, however, with which baptisms, spoken of in the New Testament, were performed, seems inconsistent with the slow process of immersion. And there is nothing said about the laying aside of garments, or precautions with regard to decency, on the part of the candidates, which would naturally have been alluded to if those baptisms had been uniformly by immersion. In the case of the 3,000 baptized in one day, not a word is said about the necessary accompaniments of immersion. Although it is a matter of great importance, the sacred writer is silent on the subject; and yet in the unimportant transaction of our Lord washing the disciples' feet, it is recorded that He "laid aside" His garment.

The Church of England uses "dipping" and "pouring" indifferently. In the rubrics for public baptism of infants we find the following: "(If they (the sponsors) shall certify him (the priest) that the child may well endure it) he shall dip it in the water, &c." "But if they certify that the child is weak, it shall suffice to pour water upon it." And in the rubric for the ministration of private baptism of children in houses, in which cases the children are always presumed to be sick, "the minister shall pour water upon it, &c." And in the rubric for public baptism of such as are of riper years, "And then shall dip him in the water, or pour water upon him, &c."

Now by a careful perusal of Scripture you will find that to dip does not necessarily mean to immerse. The Hebrew word, *tabal*; the Greek word, *bapto*; and the Latin word, *mergo*, uniformly rendered dip in the English Bible, are corresponding words, and signify to dip, to immerse, to plunge. Now a body is not immersed in water until it is entirely covered with water; but it is dipped in or into water, when any part of it comes into contact with the water. You may dip your pen, that is, the point of your pen, in ink, or you may dip your finger, that is, the tip of your finger, in water, but in neither case is there any immersion. Now to illustrate this from scripture. "As the feet of the priests that bare the ark were dipped (bapto) in the brim of the water."—Josh. 3, 15. "Send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water."—Luke 16, 24. The Jewish purifications were dippings, but not immersions. Thus the priest "shall dip his finger, or a bunch of hyssop"—that is, the end of his finger, or the end of the bunch of hyssop—"in the water."—Ex. 12, 22; Lev. 4, 17; 9, 9; 14, 6, 16, 51; Num. 19, 18; Deut. 33, 24. In all these texts the word *bapto* is used and means a partial dipping, but no immersion.

"So Jonathan put forth the end of his rod and dipped (bapto) it in the honeycomb."—1 Sam. 14, 27. "And dip (bapto) thy moriel in the vinegar."—Ruth 2, 14. So the language of Christ with regard to Judas denotes a partial dipping. "He that dippeth with me in the dish."—Matt. 26, 23; Mark 14, 20; John 13, 26. In one place in the Book of Job *bapto* has the sense of to plunge and means immersion. "Thou shalt plunge me in the ditch," that is, to cast headlong.—Job 9, 31. When Nebuchadnezzar was driven from the abodes of men, it is said that his body was wet (bapto) with the dew of heaven. Here *bapto* does not mean to immerse, or even to dip in any sense, but simply to wet or moisten. There are only, so far as I find, two instances in the Old Testament where the word *bapto* signifies to immerse. "And upon whatsoever any of them, when they are dead, doth fall, it shall be unclean, whether it be any vessel of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, what-

soever it be, wherein any work is done, it must be put into water, (bapto) and it shall be unclean until the even; so it shall be cleansed."—Lev. 11, 32. And again, "He took a thick cloth, and dipped (bapto) it in water, and spread it on his face, so that he died."—2 Kings, 8, 15. In the 68th Psalm, v. 23, *bapto* has the sense to stain or dye, which may be done either by sprinkling or immersion.

Yours faithfully,
Wm. LOGAN.

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