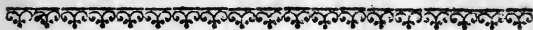




# R E M A R K S

O N

The CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S  
REASONS for administring BAPTISM  
by Sprinkling or Pouring of Water.



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С. Я. М.

И. П.

ИЗДАНИЕ МИНИСТЕРСТВА  
ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ  
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ

# R E M A R K S

O N

The CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S  
REASONS for adminiftring BAPTISM  
by Sprinkling or Pouring of Water:

I N

A Series of LETTERS to a FRIEND.

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By SAMUEL STENNETT, D. D.

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*Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in  
all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them  
to you. 1 Cor. xi. 2.*

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L O N D O N :

Printed for GEORGE KEITH, in Gracechurch-  
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P R E-



## P R E F A C E.

\* \* \* \* \* H E following sheets contain  
 \* \* \* \* \* T \* \* \* \* \* remarks upon that part only  
 \* \* \* \* \* of Mr. Addington's work,  
 which respects the *Mode* of Baptism:  
 whether the publick will be troubled  
 with any strictures on the latter part  
 of it, which treats of the *Subjects* of  
 Baptism, is uncertain. This method,  
 however, of replying to the former  
 question first, was deemed most pro-  
 per,

per, not only as the two points are of distinct consideration, but as it was apprehended the length of the remarks, in the other method, would render them tedious to the Reader, and occasion perhaps a cursory attention to them. And yet there is, it must be confessed, even in the present attempt, an appearance of prolixity which very naturally demands an apology. For who would expect that any such doubts should arise respecting the mode of a positive institution, as would require the disquisition of upwards of a hundred pages? especially considering the generally acknowledged simplicity of the Christian dispensation, and the infinite wisdom and goodness of its great Founder and Legislator. The  
truth



truth is, our Master hath conveyed his will to us in the clearest terms, and his own practice and that of his Apostles exactly correspond therewith: so that the evidence in favour of immersion, is level to the plainest understanding, and may be brought within the compass of two or three pages, as the Reader will see hath been attempted at the close of this piece. It is not therefore the intricacy of the question itself, but the doubtful light in which some may perhaps think Mr. Addington hath placed it, that has occasioned the length of these remarks. Wherefore his ingenuity in the management of the argument will, I hope, apologize for my prolixity.

x P R E F A C E.

If it be asked of what consequence it is whether much or little water is used in Baptism? I answer, the quantity is perfectly indifferent, provided there be enough to constitute the ceremony Baptism. As therefore the Baptists are clearly of opinion, that sprinkling or pouring of water upon a person is not baptizing him, they wish to be considered, while pleading for immersion, as contending not for a particular *mode* of Baptism, but for *Baptism itself*. And this being the case, they cannot look upon the question in debate as indifferent or of little importance, without admitting a principle of very injurious consequence in matters of religion, I mean a right of annihilating, or at least mutilating and changing, a positive institution.

This

This I am satisfied will be considered, by every sober and candid man, as a sufficient excuse for what might otherwise be deemed an undue attachment to forms.

And yet, persuaded as the Baptists are that, while pleading for immersion, they are pleading for the very existence of a positive institution, it is possible their zeal may exceed. This is the case when an undue stress is laid upon Baptism, and when it is defended in an improper manner. Now it is certain that *they* lay an undue stress upon this sacred rite, who maintain that it is necessary to salvation, or place it in the same point of view with a moral precept. But, if there are any Baptists who do this, I pro-

fess I do not know them. It is notorious that, as a body, they utterly disclaim such dangerous opinions. Nay, the making Baptism a saving ordinance is totally inconsistent with the grand principle upon which they exclude infants from a right to it; I mean the necessity of a profession of faith in Christ, and of a person's giving some credible proof that he is a New Creature. To which I will add, that this mistaken notion of its importance seems to have been the true cause of those corruptions both as to the *mode* and the *subjects* of the institution, which the Baptists so much lament, and so earnestly wish to reform. The Clinici, that is, persons confined to their beds by sickness, apprehending that they could not be saved without being bap-

baptized, were eager to be admitted to Baptism. But, not being in circumstances capable of immersion, sprinkling or pouring of water came to be admitted as a kind of succedaneum in the room of it. And how this reasoning operated in regard also of the admission of infants to Baptism, I think any one may easily perceive. These things considered, it will surely be acknowledged, that the Baptists, of all people, are the least to be suspected of laying any such stress upon this ordinance as is prejudicial to the interests of real personal religion. If, however, an attempt to reduce Baptism to its original simplicity, and to confine it to those only who are properly qualified for it, be deemed criminal, or an object disproportioned to

to the zeal expressed about it; I fear the laudable endeavours of Protestants in general, to rescue the other positive institution of Christ from the innovation of Romanists, will fall under the same censure.

But we are often told, that the frequent and large publications of the Baptists upon this subject, and their zealous endeavours to proselyte others to their opinion, furnish too plain a proof that they hold this tenet of theirs in a point of light much more important than it deserves. Before, however, so unfavourable a conclusion is drawn from these facts, the facts themselves ought surely to be very clearly established. As to the books that have been written upon this argument,

gument, whoever inquires into the history of the controverfy will find, that most of the productions from the pens of Baptists are answers to the writings of Pœdobaptists: so that they are scarce ever to be considered as aggressors. And as to their endeavours to profelyte others to their opinion, there may, I acknowledge, have been weak and rash attempts of this sort, which it would be a folly to excuse. I can, however, freely declare for myself (and I believe most of my brethren can say the same) that it affords me infinitely greater joy to hear, that a man is become a sincere disciple of Christ, than that in a frenzy of party-zeal he has thrown down the gauntlet, and declared himself a Champion in the cause of Baptism.

Nor

Nor do I love a fellow Christian, who conscientiously differs from me in this point, a whit less than one who has been immersed in Jordan itself. But still, an allowance should be made, and I am persuaded will by all who have any acquaintance with human nature, for the effect which a clear conviction of the truth, and a desire that others may be convinced of it, hath upon an honest mind.

As to the manner in which this controversy has been conducted, I am afraid both parties have sometimes failed, in regard of that meekness and charity which the gospel teaches, if not that good-nature and decorum which the laws of humanity demand. Such, it has often been observed, is  
the



the unhappy fate of very many religious disputes. But, wherever the fault lies, I most heartily agree with all good men in lamenting, not excusing it. Intemperate heat will naturally enough precipitate a bigot (and such there are among all denominations of Christians) into these shameful mistakes. But how strange is it that they who mean well, however mistaken, should suffer themselves to be put out of humour by the weakness of their own arguments! A sensible observer will, in such a case, give a shrewd guess where the truth lies, without entering into the debate. It ill becomes me, I own, confidently to determine on which side the weight of this presumptive kind of evidence, in the dispute about

Baptism, preponderates. If, however, the Baptists are chargeable with any degree of that guilt, I hope it will receive no addition to it from this attempt.

Besides the many considerations which the gospel suggests, to guard me against undue warmth, there is one which ought to have a peculiar effect on *my* mind, and that is the example of a much honoured Ancestor, who has not only done singular justice to the argument itself, but, in the management of it, has shewn a noble superiority to the rudest and most indecent invectives, that were perhaps ever thrown out against any set of men professing Christianity. I mean not by this to insinuate, that the book to  
which

which I reply bears a resemblance to that. No. The ingenious Author is a man of a very different cast from Mr. Ruffen: his language is decent, his manner pleasing, and his professions candid and impartial. And I should strangely forget myself, if I did not hold his character, as a Gentleman, a Scholar, and a Minister, in all due respect. Yet, if it should be found that expressions have dropt from Mr. Addington's pen, that may draw upon a body of people reflections of a very ignominious kind, he will not think it strange that an Apologist should feel pain on their behalf. Groundless as those reflections are, I forbear to mention them here, as I mean to appeal to the judgment of the Reader, not to his passions. If,

xx P R E F A C E.

however, in the course of these Remarks, I should at any time have been so unhappy as to express myself with too much warmth, I hope it will be forgiven me; and that an error of this sort will not be construed into a design of fixing the imputation of a malignant intention on the Author to whom I reply.

L E T-



## LETTER I.

Dear Sir,

AT your request, I send you some  
A general remarks on a performance  
of Mr. *Addington's*, on the long  
controverted subject of Baptism. A  
piece which has indeed been some time published,  
but did not till lately fall into my hands.  
The idea I had formed of the Author, as a sensible  
as well as pious man, his professions of *impartiality*  
in the dedication, and the account he there gives  
of the result of his inquiry, that it was "abundantly  
satisfactory to him," led me to apprehend that he  
had something to say upon the subject which I had  
not considered, or however not so deliberately as  
he had done; so that I expected to find the  
argument on his side of the question, placed in  
a new, if not a more convincing, point of light.  
But, upon looking into the book, I found the  
matter quite otherwise;

wife; and the farther I proceed in a particular and accurate examination of it, the more I am convinced that my apprehension was ill founded. I should indeed have been glad, if his reasoning, though false, had not been so loose, unconnected, and desultory; as in that case I should have been at less pain in following him, and you would have less trouble in perusing my remarks.

You will not, Sir, I am sure, charge me with being uncandid, when I say, that Mr. *A.*'s sense of the motto affixed to his title, is to be explained by the title itself, that precedes it; and consequently that he would have us consider the prophet, when he says, *He shall sprinkle many nations*, as meaning that Christ should, either himself, or by his ministers, baptize infants by sprinkling or pouring of water upon them. I am aware indeed that mottos are often chosen in a way of accommodation; but, as most readers will be apt to understand him as I have done, I cannot think Mr. *A.* if he had not wished them to consider the passage as referring to Baptism, would have thrown such a snare in their way. And yet I know not how to persuade myself that he does really believe this to be the sense of the text. If it be clearly the sense of it, all occasion of his after-labors is manifestly precluded; and a man need go no farther than the title for a satisfactory proof of the point our Author would maintain. Nay, if this

interpretation of the passage be admitted, the next clause of the verse, some will perhaps say, may with as good reason be referred to Baptism also. The plain meaning is, that his doctrine should descend like rain upon many nations and people, and with such evidence and conviction, that even kings should be struck dumb, and have nothing to reply. And what, I beseech you, Sir, has this to do with Baptism? Thus unhappy has Mr. *A.* been in the choice of his motto! And if this be the "first reason" he has to offer in favor of his opinion, I cannot but think the considerate reader will be apt to suspect, that those which follow may not, all of them, be perfectly conclusive.

As professions of candor, modesty, and impartiality, have frequently an undue influence on some kind of readers, and as I have myself felt the force of them with respect to Mr. *A.*; it may not be amiss to make a few remarks on his "Dedication" and "Advertisement." He informs his people, that "previous to his inquiry into the scripture doctrine of Christian Baptism, he endeavoured to divest himself of every prejudice, and determined to follow the truth whithersoever it might lead him (*a*)." A noble resolution this! A resolution in which I most

(*a*) Page 3.

4 *Introductory Remarks.*

heartily wish he may be followed by every inquirer into the matter now in debate. But, I acknowledge, Sir, it not a little surpriseth me to hear him declare afterwards, in such strong terms, that the result of this his inquiry was “ abundantly satisfactory to him;” and that “ the reasons for his practice appear to him now in a much stronger light than before; and that he is more fully convinced than ever, that the specious objections which are thrown out against it, have no solid foundation in reason, or the word of God (b).” I shall only observe here, that it will appear from many concessions which I shall cite in the sequel, that the effect of such inquiry has been very different with respect to some of the wisest and most learned men, that this or any other country have produced; and who, notwithstanding, have continued in the same practice with our Author. One instance, however, I cannot help mentioning in this place: it is of Bp. *Taylor*, whose learning and piety will not allow us to question his having taken great pains to investigate this subject, and his having endeavoured, like Mr. *A.*, to divest himself of every prejudice. He says, upon summing up the whole, that *there is much more truth than evidence on his side*, that is, on the side of the Pædobaptists (c).

(b) Page 4. (c) Liberty of Prophesying, § 18. edit. An. 1647.



As Mr. *A.* has thus entered upon his inquiry without prejudice, so he tells us he has prosecuted it with deliberation. “He hath not written in haste. He hath endeavoured to enter into the true meaning of such passages as relate to Baptism, and hath explained them in a sense that appears to him (upon the maturest consideration) most consistent and scriptural (*d*).” Whether he has succeeded, we shall quickly see. But I cannot help fearing, from the specimen he has given us in the title-page, that his consideration of other passages may have been rather *hasty*, than *mature* and deliberate.

His reasons for this publication, so far as he has thought fit to disclose them, I think none can disapprove, viz. “To gratify the desire of his people, who wished to have the reasons of their conduct explained in public.” But, considering the reputation in which Infant Baptism is generally held, it was rather superfluous to add, “that he might not seem ashamed of any doctrine or duty taught in the eternal oracles of truth (*e*).” As for “those reasons, which in tenderness to others, he chuses to suppress here;” he hath only left me at liberty to guess what they are (*f*). I therefore conjecture (tho’ how the matter is I know not) that some Bap-

(*d*) Page 4, 5.(*e*) Page 4, 5.(*f*) Page 5.

tists in Mr. *A.*'s neighbourhood have lately been defending their principles; and, I hope, from the same motive with him, "that they might not seem ashamed of what they believe to be their duty," and which too many treat not only with indifference, but contempt. This may perhaps have put his people upon the inquiry. And if that should prove to be the case, I really think he should, in tenderness to his people, have rather prudently suppressed *his reasons for Infant-Baptism*, than, in tenderness to the Baptists, have thus suppressed *his reasons for publishing* those reasons. But be Mr. *A.*'s private reasons what they may, if the interests of truth are promoted by his publication, all wise and good men of every denomination will, I hope, rejoice. You will allow me, Sir, now I am speaking of Mr. *A.*'s tenderness to his Baptist-neighbours, to express my wishes that, for his own sake, his tenderness had extended a little farther; and that, as he has assured us, "he hath not written with a design to offend," he had *tenderly suppressed* a long note he hath inserted towards the close of his book, in order (I hope I am not uncharitable in saying it) to give his reader an unfavourable idea of the origin of the Baptists. This surely is not very candid. It is acting, some will be apt to think, too much like those whom our author himself stiles, *ill-natured retailers of hackney'd ob-*  
*serva-*

*servations.* The consideration of the note itself I shall refer to its proper place.

In his Advertisement, which follows the Dedication, Mr. *A.* tells us, that “the ensuing treatise is intended not so much to amuse as to instruct.” How it may have been with others I know not; but as to me, the effect, I acknowledge, has been the direct contrary to what the Author intended: I am much more *amused* than *instructed*. This, however, being the case, I am in the less danger of feeling any the least provocation he may have given to “an angry contentious spirit,” which he assures us in the next sentence, and I am candidly disposed to believe, was by no means his intention. Indeed, Sir, the reading his book is so far from having any such effect upon me, that I verily believe, if I had taken it up in an ill humour (which I am not at all conscious I did) the amusement his mistaken reasoning has afforded me, would have quickly put me into a good temper. As to what follows, that his intention was “to promote a practical regard to a divine institution;” I need not take pains to convince you, my friend, that this is my intention also in making these remarks upon his performance; though I can by no means agree with him that Infant Baptism is a divine institution. His very serious request to those of a contrary opinion to him, I feel myself perfect-

ly inclined to comply with ; and, having put the question he proposes, conscientiously reply in his own words — That “ I am desirous to know “ and do the will of God in this matter.” And, as I am not one of those “ who resolutely deter-  
 mine to persist in their opinion, in spite of all  
 evidence, and who turn the scripture-doctrine  
 of Baptism into mere matter of vain jangling” (a suspicion which no candid author should hastily admit concerning any of his readers) I have Mr. *A.*’s allowance “ to proceed.” The very proper directions he has given, as to the manner of considering his treatise, I am persuaded you approve ; and hope, Sir, when you, assisted by those directions, have weighed his *reasons* and my *remarks* upon them, you will be disposed “ to  
 embrace,” as Mr. *A.* well expresses it, “ that  
 opinion which appears to you, on mature  
 thought and impartial inquiry, best supported  
 by sound reason, credible testimony, and the  
 word of God.”

To his Advertisement our Author has annexed a P. S. in which he has thrown out what he calls a *presumptive* argument in favour of Infant Baptism, and which his imagination seems to have suggested to him when he had finished his work. By a presumptive argument here, I suppose Mr. *A.* means an argument arising out of the utility and fitness of Infant Baptism, distinct  
 from

from the consideration of its being a positive institution. The question, therefore, whether it is or it is not of divine authority, is here for a moment to be held out of view. And now what is Mr. *A.*'s reasoning? It is this — “The birth  
 “ of a child is an event of great importance to a  
 “ family, and it must appear a parent's duty, it  
 “ cannot but be a pious parent's inclination,  
 “ early to devote his children to God through  
 “ Christ; expressing his fervent desires that they  
 “ may partake with himself, of the blessings of  
 “ the christian covenant.” All this, Sir, is very true, and I suppose there is no Baptist but would readily assent to it. But what is Mr. *A.*'s consequence? “Therefore we seem to need such a  
 “ rite as this.” If by *need* he means, that we *cannot* devote our children to God through Christ, or express our fervent desires, &c. without sprinkling them; and if that were a real fact, his reasoning would be just. But I suppose his meaning is, either that there is a peculiar fitness in this ceremony to express our dedication of them to God; or that, if it were omitted, most people would feel the want of some such rite in its room. Now, as to the fitness of this ceremony to express the dedication of our children to God, I acknowledge I cannot perceive it: or if I could, that argument would have just the same weight with me in favour of Infant Baptism, that the fitness of the cross in Baptism, to express the

character of a disciple of Christ, would have with Mr. *A.* in favour of that ceremony. And as to the general idea of most peoples apprehending some such ceremony to be wanting to children, it is a very fallacious kind of argument: it does not arise out of the reason and nature of the thing itself, but out of a prejudice confirmed by long and general custom. To reason, therefore, after this manner, is just the same as if a Papist were to say, it is a strong presumptive argument in favour of extreme unction, that most people *seem to need such a rite as this.* The truth is, as Mr. *A.* well expresses it with regard to the Jews, “ Having been taught a religious regard to ancient ceremonies from their infancy, and having performed them many years as divine rites, they were unwilling intirely to lay them aside (*g*).” There are some Pœdobaptists, Sir, if I am not mistaken, who speak of bringing their children into covenant by Baptism. Now, if there were any fitness in the institution to that end, I confess there would be great need of such a rite. But Mr. *A.* has not thus expressed himself in the passage before us, and therefore it is not my business to discuss that point here.

And now, after what has been said to invalidate our Author’s *presumptive argument* in favour of Infant Baptism, would you expect, Sir, to see

me confronted with my own brethren? Yet such is my unhappiness! "This argument," says he, "appears to receive additional strength from the practice of our Baptist brethren, (many of them at least) who, feeling the need, propriety, and usefulness of some such rite as we suppose Infant Baptism to be, have invented one of their own, which nearly resembles it, excepting in the ceremonial part of it." I would not be too critical, Sir, but there seems to me, I acknowledge, something odd in the conceit of a rite that resembles another rite, excepting in the ceremonial part of that rite. This sounds a little like, a rite that has nothing of a rite in it. But be that as it may, let us inquire how the matter stands. I suppose Mr. A. refers to the practice of some pious parents among the Baptists, who, upon the birth of a child, call in their christian friends, to assist them "in devoting (to use our Author's own words above) their children to God through Christ; and in expressing their fervent desires that they may partake, with themselves, of the blessings of the Christian covenant." Now what is there in all this that gives the least countenance to Mr. A.'s opinion of their *seeming to need such a rite as infant sprinkling*? Whatever resemblance there may be between this practice of theirs, and that of their Pædobaptist brethren, he himself says that they do not conform to *the ceremonial*

part : and if they do not, what is this but a plain declaration on their part that *they do not need such ceremony*? And if this, by his own confession, is the language of their practice, as well as their doctrine, how is it that by such practice they add strength to his argument? Besides, if there were any thing in this reasoning, our Author himself admits that this is not a general practice among the Baptists. And I hope those ministers, who think it their duty to assist on these occasions, do conscientiously avoid (and I know it to be true of many of them) every thing that looks like establishing one rite in the room of another. I have only to observe farther, that it is a little strange Mr. *A.* should call this practice of theirs a rite of *their own*, since he cannot but be sensible that it is clearly warranted by that general exhortation of the apostle, *In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God (b).*

Thus, Sir, I have followed Mr. *A.* through his Dedication, Advertisement, and Postscript; and you may perhaps shortly receive some farther remarks on the book itself, from, Sir,

Your humble Servant,

S. S.

(b) Phil. iv. 6.



## L E T T E R II.

Dear S I R,

O U R author divides his work into two parts. In the first, he considers *the mode or manner of administering Christian Baptism*; and in the second, *the subjects of it*. We begin with the former, and shall at present confine ourselves to his first chapter, wherein he treats *of the nature and perpetuity of Christian Baptism, and the persons by whom it is to be administered*. As we agree with him in the two last points, respecting the perpetuity of this ordinance, and the persons appointed to administer it, our chief business here will be to examine what he has to offer concerning the nature and intent of this institution (a).

He

(a) Though I pass over what Mr. A. says concerning the perpetuity of Christian Baptism, it may not be amiss to make a remark, in a note, upon the very proper answer he gives, page the fifth, to an objection started against it. "Some, says he, have indeed supposed that Baptism was adopted by Christ, and practised by his apostles, as a temporary accommodation to the genius and customs of the Jews, who had been used to proselyte-baptism and many other washings, in, and before the time of

our

He sets out with giving us our Saviour's commission to his first ministers; and having observed that "they accordingly administered and recommended this ordinance, not for the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God; and that the apostle *Paul* speaks of baptized Christians as having put on Christ, and as being all baptized into one body;" he tells us, that "from these and other similar representations of Christian Baptism in the New Testament, it seems an ordinance intended to signify the separation of the disciples of Christ from an unbelieving and sinful world, to be a peculiar people to the Lord; and is to be considered as an outward seal or token of the covenant of grace, and of God's receiving his people into that covenant, and bestowing upon them all its invaluable blessings (b)."

Now, in this account of the nature and intent of the institution, Mr. *A.* considers Baptism either as having respect to the character or profession of the person baptized; or else merely as a sign to our Saviour. But if so, they would, more probably, have confined it to Jewish converts. Yet their Lord's command was to baptize all nations." From hence, it should seem, he gives up the point respecting proselyte-baptism among the Jews. Yet he introduces that argument towards the close of the book, where I shall speak more largely of it.

(b) P. 1, 2.

or token of the truths themselves expressed in his definition, and without any reference of them at all to the persons baptized. It is indeed difficult to ascertain his precise meaning: that we may not, however, mistake him; we will examine his reasoning in each of these views.

1. If Mr. *A.* considers Baptism as having respect to the character or profession of the person baptized, let us see how his account of the matter will apply to the infant-seed of believers, whom he judges to be the proper subjects of this institution. *It seems, he says, an ordinance intended to signify the separation of the disciples of Christ from an unbelieving and sinful world, to be a peculiar people to the Lord.* This account of Baptism is, unquestionably, very sensible and proper when applied to believers themselves: for they, having become the disciples of Christ by believing on Him, do by Baptism solemnly profess their having separated themselves from an unbelieving and sinful world, to be a peculiar people to the Lord. And this view of the intent of Baptism, with respect to *them*, very well agrees with the passages our Author had just before cited, and on which he grounds his definition; particularly those which describe them as having put on Christ, and as becoming members of his mystical body. But how does it apply to infants? Is Baptism a sign or token of *their* separation,

&c.?

&c.? If it be, what proof, or what appearance of proof, have we of such separation? They do not tell us they have separated themselves, for of that they are incapable. God has no where told us that He has separated this or the other infant to Himself. Nor will their parents say, that they have in any other way separated them than by their wishes and prayers. And as to Baptism itself it has no efficacy in it to separate them, as Mr. *A.* himself acknowledges, when he tells us that baptism is not regeneration: besides, if it had any such efficacy in it to that end, it would be the instrument, not the sign or token, of their separation. Of what then is Baptism a sign or token as to infants? of nothing—of no change in their state and condition, that hath taken place either before or at their Baptism.—I would here observe farther, that Mr. *A.*'s account of the matter supposes them *disciples of Christ* before Baptism: which seems strange, since most defenders of Infant-Baptism, in order to evade the force of the argument arising from our Lord's commission to teach first and baptize afterwards, tell us his meaning is that persons are to be *discipled* by being baptized; and this seems to be Mr. *A.*'s own sense of the passage, as he has given this interpretation to the word *μαθητευσατε* (c).

(c) See p. 110. § 2.

But, if this account of the nature and intent of Baptism will not apply to infants, let us see whether that will which he gives us in the latter clause of the sentence. “*It is to be considered,*” he tells us, “*as an outward seal or token of the*” “*covenant of God’s grace, and of his receiving his*” “*people into that covenant, and bestowing upon them*” “*all its invaluable blessings.*” I shall not stay here to inquire upon what grounds Baptism is to be considered as a seal or token of the covenant; but only observe, that this idea of it is not warranted by those passages of scripture our Author had just cited, and from whence he infers this his account of the nature of this ordinance; for in them there is no mention made of any covenant, much less of Baptism as the seal of it. Nor is it deducible from any “*other*” “*similar representations of Christian Baptism,*” that I can recollect, “*in the New Testa-*” “*ment.*” But we will, for the present, admit that it is a seal or token of the covenant. Let us see then, from Mr. *A.*’s account of this covenant, with what propriety the seal of it is to be applied to infants. If it be inquired, what it is that God engages in this covenant to bestow? Mr. *A.* replies, “*all the blessings of his love*” “*both here and hereafter.*” If it be asked, who are the persons on whom He bestows these blessings? Mr. *A.* answers, “*his people, those who*” “*are born of water and the Spirit, the regene-*” “*rate,*

“rate, and the heirs of promise (d).” And if it be farther questioned, how Baptism becomes a seal of this covenant? He plainly tells us, “not as procuring a title to the inheritance of the saints, or as having any influence to effect a change upon the baptized, but merely as it is an external token or memorial of regeneration (e).” In which sense, he says, that phrase, *the washing of regeneration*, if it refers to Baptism, is to be understood. That ordinance is not regeneration, “but a memorial of it.”—I shall not stay here to consider the arguments with which he refutes the opinion of those, and particularly of the Christian fathers, who confounded Baptism and regeneration, as upon this matter we are agreed. But you will allow me, Sir, just to observe, as I pass on, that if the fathers, and that in a very early age, were capable of falling into so gross an error, it is not at all to be wondered at that they should mistake the point, as to the proper subjects of Baptism.—But to return, we have seen what is our Author’s account of the covenant of grace. Now, admitting that Baptism is the seal of it, how does it follow that infants, yea the infant-seed of believers, are the persons to whom that seal ought to be applied? Do they answer to the description he has given of the subjects or parties of this covenant? Are they the people of God? Are they the regene-

(d) P. 2, 3.

(e) Ibid.

rate? Are they indiscriminately the heirs of that promise which includes in it, as he tells us, all the blessings of God's love both here and hereafter? If they are, if the scriptures any where say they are, or if there be any distinguishing marks or appearances upon the children of believers, which furnish any the least credible or probable proof of it; then it follows upon Mr. *A.*'s view of baptism as a seal, that it ought to be administered to them. But, on the contrary, if this is not the case, it follows from our Author's own idea of the nature and intent of Baptism, that infants have no right to it. But, that I may not be charged with mistaking his meaning, I will now,

2. Inquire into the force of his reasoning, upon a supposition, that he considers Baptism merely as a sign or token of the truths themselves expressed in his definition, without any reference of those truths to the persons baptized. That this is his meaning seems probable from his styling Baptism a "memorial" of this truth, "that without renovation of heart no one shall see God," and his speaking of it as an ordinance "connected with that of preaching (*f*)." And if this be his view of Baptism, it is similar to theirs who consider the Lord's Supper merely as a representation or memorial of the fact of our

Lord's death and sufferings, and as intended to preserve alive the remembrance of that event in the world, without any regard to the characters of those who partake of it, or any obligation it is supposed to lay upon them.—Now, if this be his idea of Baptism, it is totally indifferent, in regard to the use or intent of it, to whom or to what it is administered. Be the baptized who they may, old or young, regenerate or unregenerate, believers or infidels; or be the thing what it will that is baptized, the end is answered; for the ceremony is a public declaration to all men, that whoever is saved must be sprinkled with the blood of Christ, and be renewed by the washing of regeneration. But surely this notion, as it appears upon the first view of it to be vain and nugatory, hath no foundation in scripture. The New Testament, it is well known, every where speaks of a submission to this ordinance, as expressive of the faith of him who is baptized in Christ the Son of God, of his being buried with Christ, of his rising with Him to newness of life, of his putting on Christ, of his incorporation with Him, and of his concern by Baptism to answer a good conscience towards God. And the apostles reason, with those converts whom they had baptized, upon the personal obligations they hereby laid themselves under to a holy life and conversation.—But I shall take no farther pains to obviate this mistaken notion,

since,



since, however Mr. A. has so expressed himself in this chapter as that his account of the nature and intent of Baptism will admit of such a sense, the kind of reasoning he afterwards adopts inclines me to think it cannot be his opinion.

I am,

Sir, &c.

L E T-

L E T T E R III.

Dear S I R,

WE now go on to Mr. *A.*'s second chapter, in which he treats of *Names and Ceremonies in general, and the Rite of Immersion in particular.* In his first section he gives us the etymology of the names Pædo—Antipædo—and Ana-baptists. Upon which I shall only observe, that, as to the last of these names, the Baptists consider it as a term of reproach, since they utterly disapprove of the repetition of Baptism; and, if they at any time do baptize those who have been sprinkled in their infancy, they do it upon a firm persuasion that sprinkling and baptizing are two distinct things, and of a nature totally different from each other.—As to what follows, respecting the unhappy quarrels which have arisen out of an undue attachment to particular names, I most heartily join with our Author in lamenting those evils. There may have been, I am ready to acknowledge, too much warmth on that side of the question for which I am an advocate; but Mr. *A.* will also admit that the Baptists have received a kind of chastisement from other pens, if not from his, which

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the meekness and candor he very properly recommends, will scarce justify. So that, if the account remains to be settled, they may possibly have some small demand to make upon their opponents, which yet I hope they are sincerely willing to remit.

Mr. A.'s willingness, I charitably suppose, to allay these heats, hath hastily led him, in his second section, into a concession upon the point of *indifference* as to the particular mode of baptizing, which I know not how to reconcile with the general tenor of his argument. He tells us, that “our divine Master hath not absolutely fixed the mode of administering water in this ordinance (a).” By which it should seem he means, that the question is left wholly undecided, and that we are at liberty to practice which form we please. And yet he elsewhere tells us, on the one hand, that “he cannot find a single passage, in the whole book of God, in which the immersion of the whole body is required in this ordinance (b);” and on the other, that “sprinkling or pouring water is the ancient or scriptural mode of baptizing (c)—the point he every where labours to prove. Surely then our Lord has absolutely fixed the mode. And as this seems to be our Author’s clear opinion (however he contradicts himself)

(a) P. 11. (b) P. 13. § 3. (c) P. 23.

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the pains he immediately takes to expose the zeal of Jewish and Gentile converts for ceremonies repealed and laid aside, and for matters perfectly indifferent in themselves, are to no purpose at all in the present argument: for how is an attachment to what is required, deserving of the same censure with an attachment to what is not required? If indeed the fact had been as Mr. A. had expressed it, tho' undesignedly, that Christ has not fixed the mode of Baptism; then, his zeal for sprinkling, and mine for immersion, would have clearly brought us both within the description of the weak and scrupulous Corinthians, whose case he afterwards cites: though even then we should not have been equally criminal with those others he refers to, who were fond of introducing ancient ceremonies which had been expressly laid aside. — But, if we take the matter the other way, and say that scripture has determined the mode, which is our Author's opinion as well as mine; then, the cases he has cited are none of them in point as to either of us.—So far, however, as he means to correct a luxuriant zeal, and to persuade Christians to proportion their warmth to the importance of the matter for which they contend, I most heartily agree with him.

But, before I dismiss this subject, give me leave, Sir, to take notice of the too frequent abuse of the term *Indifference*, when applied to the doctrines  
and

and precepts of religion. It cannot with propriety be affirmed of any truth or duty, that it is in itself indifferent, unless we will say that a proposition may be true and false, or a duty binding and not binding, at the same time. The term has respect to the importance of any matter; and in this view of it we may very properly say of a thing, that it is indifferent, as not being of the same consequence with some other thing of greater moment, with which it is compared. So, as to Baptism, if the scriptures have fixed the mode, it is absurd to say the mode is indifferent: nor do I know how we can wantonly depart from it without affronting the authority of Christ the great Legislator, and opening the door to a thousand innovations in religion of very dangerous consequence. But when we consider Baptism in reference to its importance, we say right that it is a matter of indifference, in comparison with the much weightier concerns of religion, such as faith, judgment, and mercy.

To return. Mr. A.'s last section contains a collection of general arguments against immersion, taken from the supposed *Indecency*, *Painfulness*, and in some places *Impracticability* of it: all which are introduced with an assurance, "that  
" he cannot find one passage in the whole book  
" of God that requires the immersion of the  
" whole body in water." In what a pitiable  
C state

state then must the Baptists be!—without one scripture to warrant their practice, and the united suffrages of decency, good-nature, and common-sense against it. Sure, Sir, these Baptists must be a set of the most silly, obstinate, ill-natured people in the whole world. But what if it should be found in the sequel that the Baptists have many passages to produce in favour of immersion! some of them so clear as to oblige several very learned Pædobaptists to acknowledge, that *that* was most certainly the primitive mode; and all of them so unyielding even to Mr. *A.*'s own pen, as to subject them to the torture of near thirty pages! And what if it should also be found that he has not produced either one precept, or one example, to authorize Baptism by sprinkling! In that case, I fancy, Sir, you will agree with me, that though it is not quite so generous in our Author, at the outset, to represent the Baptists as offending against the rules of modesty, and laying a yoke upon the disciples of Christ too grievous to be borne; yet, that such a kind of appeal to the passions of weak persons, and particularly to the delicacy of the tender sex, is prudent, and shews him to be well skilled in the arts of controversy. These illiberal reflections on the practice of immersion, are so frequently thrown out by some sort of writers on this subject, that I am sure they may be stiled, as Mr. *A.* somewhere expresses it, “hackney'd observations;”

“ tions;” though I will not say *he* is “ an ill-natured retailer of them (*d*),” since I am rather inclined to think the weakness of the cause he was defending rendered them in some fort necessary.

And now, what is our Author’s reasoning upon these trite and invidious topics of argument? Having told us that “ immersion was “ not the usual manner of washing with water “ under the Mosaic dispensation,” (a fact which Mr. *A.* can scarce expect we should credit upon his bare assertion, and which, as it is only thrown out here occasionally, I shall refer to after consideration) having, I say, asserted this, he adds, “ But if immersion had been the usual “ manner, we cannot think that Jesus would “ have enjoined it upon his followers in all ages “ and nations.” And why?—“ Because such “ an indecent and grievous practice would have “ very ill become the condescending regard the “ merciful Jesus was used to pay to the genius and “ customs of the people among whom He lived;” and does by no means consist with the cautions his Apostles afterwards directed to Christians, “ to give none offence, either to Jew or Gentile, or “ the church of God (*e*)”. Our Saviour’s condescending compliance with the indifferent usages of the Jews is not to be questioned, nor will,

(*d*) Dedicat. p. 6.

(*e*) P. 13. § 3.

I suppose, any sober man deny that we ought to avoid giving just cause of offence to any. But, if the customs and prejudices of the people in general are to be consulted, in order to our determining whether this or that institution be of divine authority; I fear Mr. *A.* will find himself obliged to renounce his profession as a Dissenter, and reconcile himself to the church of England, if not that of Rome. His argument therefore hath no weight in it, unless the practice of immersion is really *indecent*, and so a violation of the law of nature; or very *grievous*, and so scarce practicable. Each of these charges, however, he sets himself with a very good will to prove.

Indeed, as to the charge of *Indecency*, we are obliged to our Author for a concession at setting out, which (though I hardly know how to reconcile it with what he had said a few lines before) in a good measure takes off the imputation of immodesty he would fain fix upon it. “The usual methods, says he, of baptizing by immersion might not, perhaps, eighteen hundred years ago, be offensive in Judea.” He had told us just before that “immersion was not the usual manner of washing with water under the Mo- saic dispensation (*f*).” But now it should seem it was, and that Mr. *A.* has changed his mind upon that point. Or, if his meaning is that the



present usual method of baptizing by immersion, had it been practised at that time, might not be offensive, that is, deemed indecent; still he admits that *that* method is not in itself indecent, and of consequence that this presumption of his against it is groundless. But I will go farther than our Author, and say, that immersion not only *might* then be, but that it actually *was*, practised with decency. *Josephus*, in his account of the *Essenes*, a sect remarkable for their modesty, describes particularly the manner in which they bathed themselves every day before dinner. Having related how they employ themselves all the morning at their trades, he tells us, that at a certain hour they again assemble in one place, and, *having dressed themselves in linen cloathes, they thus wash their bodies in cold water* (g).

Mr. *A.* goes on, “nor can we say that the method of baptizing by immersion, would disgust the uncultivated and uncloathed inhabitants of the south of Africa even now.” So that, upon the whole, he is of opinion it might be inoffensive enough in Judæa and Africa.—“But it is very certain” (and here comes in a charge against the Baptists, which like a mighty millstone is to sink their doctrine, and with it their

(g)—ζωσαμενοι τε σκεπασμασι λινοις, ετως απολουσαι το σωμα ψυχροις υδασι.

*Joseph. de Bel. Jud. lib. 2. cap. 8. Edit. Hudson.*

reputation too, so as never any more, in the opinion of modest and virtuous persons, to rise again) “ it is very certain, that the custom of  
 “ publickly plunging mixed multitudes of men  
 “ and women, either naked (as some have done)  
 “ or in thin vestments, or in their usual dress,  
 “ is accounted an indecency by many in more  
 “ civilized nations (b).” I suppose a common reader, who happened to be unacquainted with the Baptists, would conclude from this representation of them, that it is their custom publickly to plunge mixed multitudes of men and women naked, or in such thin vestments as render their manner of baptizing very indecent. And yet the sentence is so constructed, I will not say designedly, as to enable our Author to elude the censure of misrepresentation. For, if it be denied that they baptize persons naked, or in thin garments, he has still to reply that his charge is, that they plunge persons *either* naked, *or* in thin vestments, *or* in their usual dress. So that if they disprove the two former charges, the latter remains true. Yet it is plain from the connexion of the sentence with what he had said just before of the *uncloathed* Africans, and with what immediately follows concerning *bathing*, that he meant to fix the imputation of great indecency upon their mode of baptizing.

—————, *sic veris falsa remiscet.*

(b) P. 13. § 3.

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Let us therefore spend a few words upon what is thus insinuated to their disreputation. Will our Author say that it is their custom to plunge mixed multitudes of men and women naked? No.—But “this some have done.” Pray who are these persons? Mr. *A.* would do well to tell us. If, however, there were one or two such persons; their conduct, which he cannot but know the Baptists in general would detest with horror, would admit of no conclusion unfavourable to immersion, any more than the abuse of the Lord’s supper among the Corinthians, would admit of an inference unfavourable to the use of wine in that institution.—But is it their custom to baptize persons in such thin vestments, as render the practice immodest? I believe Mr. *A.* himself, if he has been used to attend any of these solemnities, will scarce venture to assert it. Or if he has not attended any of them, those of his *friends* or *relations* that have, if he will take the pains to inquire of them, will sufficiently inform him to the contrary. Why then should he insinuate, concerning his poor brethren the Baptists, that their practice, though it might not disgust an unclothed African, yet is indecent in this civilized country? For, after all, their practice is found to be no other than that of immersing persons in the water, in their usual dress (*i*).

And

(*i*) If Mr. *A.* had ever been at *Bath, Southampton, &c.* he would have known, that, for men and women, pro-

And is this to be accounted such an indecency, as that “ professing Christians in general, and “ the women in particular, should be called upon “ to see to it that they have the authority of an “ express command of Christ, before they submit to be thus plunged in water, lest they offend some, and give occasion to others to speak “ evil of the gospel, and of their divine Master?” Surely, Sir, some of this warmth might be spared. Or, however, if there were a propriety in a caution of this kind to Christian men, there seems, methinks, little occasion for so solemn an address to the *women*; since the natural delicacy and tenderness of their sex, Mr. *A.* must be sensible from the dread he himself feels at the idea of immersion, would scarce allow *them* to submit to it, if that authority he refers to had not had its due weight with them. Nor need he remind them, “ that “ it is uncomely for a woman to pray to God uncovered.” They know it; but cannot understand how it should from thence be infer’d, that it is uncomely to follow their Master into his grave, in their usual dress. Vile, indeed, they may be in the eyes of some few who contemptuously watch them from the window of a Michal; but that, I am persuaded, gives them little uneasiness, as they have not only the ark of the  
 perly cloathed, to bathe promiscuously, and in publick, is not considered as indecent by people in general, in this island.

covenant

covenant with them, but also the testimony of all sober sensible spectators, to the decency observed on these solemn occasions.

But, if the plunging persons in the water, in their usual dress, be not indecent, is not the practice of immersion *irksome* and *painful*? Our Author is of opinion it is, and that “in many seasons and climates it is not only burdensome, but unsafe both to people and ministers; not only distressing to the spirits, but hazardous to the constitution: and therefore he cannot think that the tender and compassionate Jesus, whose yoke is easy, and who expressed a tender regard to the lives and health of mankind in general, and of his own disciples in particular, that he would universally require the performance of such a rite as this (*d*).” If Mr. *A.* means no more by this, than that Christ would not have Baptism administered to any at the manifest hazard of their lives, and that in all such instances it should be forborne; the Baptists intirely agree with him, and for the reason he has mentioned, “because God will have mercy and not sacrifice.” But if he would infer from the supposed unsafety, in some instances, of baptizing by immersion, that therefore it is not probable that mode would be enjoined at all, his reason-

(*d*) Page 14, 15.

ing surely is not very conclusive. It is much as if he were to say upon the passage just before cited, that because sacrificing was in some instances injurious to a person, and upon that account not required, that therefore it is not imaginable God would require men to sacrifice at all; and that our Saviour's vindicating his followers in breaking through a restriction of the Mosaic law, furnished a presumptive argument against the law itself. But who does not perceive the weakness of such reasoning? The conclusion indeed has some force with respect to those seasons and climates, in which immersion is manifestly unsafe and hazardous. But Mr. *A.* must first tell us what those seasons and climates are. Is it at the manifest hazard of mens lives, that they at any season of the year bathe in this country? No surely. Prejudiced as people were formerly against the practice of bathing, there were sensible men, physicians and others, who intirely approved of it\*. But it is now, I believe, generally

\* Lord *Bacon* says, "It is strange that the use of bathing, as a part of diet, is left. With the Romans and Græcians it was as usual as eating or sleeping; and so it is amongst the Turks at this day;——" Nat. Hist. Cent. VIII. Experiment 740, touching the use of bathing.

Sir *John Floyer*, an eminent physician, in an essay wrote by him about the beginning of this century, to prove cold bathing both safe and useful, gives an account of many great cures done by it, and inserts an alphabetical catalogue

nerally acknowledged, to be not only safe but useful. Many are baptized at all seasons of the year; nor have I yet heard of any one's suffering in his health thereby. Nay, in Russia, a much colder climate than this, it is well known that Baptism is universally administered by immersion. What ground then for this censure upon the Baptists; as if, void of that tenderness and compassion which distinguished their Master, they were willing to sacrifice the health and lives of their friends to their obstinate singularity? His argument, therefore, from the supposed dangers of baptizing by immersion, is totally without foundation.

But it will still be said, if it be not unsafe, yet it is so *grievous* a rite, that we can scarce presume the mild and gentle Jesus would enjoin it upon his disciples. So then, Sir, its disagreeableness to flesh and blood is to be the criterion of a divine institution. Surely, if Abraham and his descendents had reasoned after this manner,

logue of diseases against which it has been successful. I rather mention him, because he takes occasion in the course of this performance, to lament (for this very reason of the utility as well as safety of bathing) the disuse of Baptismal immersion in England, which, he says, continued till about the year 1600; and observes, that no subject can give a clearer evidence, how easily new opinions can change the best and most ancient practices, both in religion and physick, than this.

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they would scarce have admitted the painful ceremony of circumcision into their religion; or however they would have quickly changed it into one more easy and tolerable. But Mr. *A.* aware of this objection, tells us that the dispensation of the gospel is mild and spiritual. It is so; yet, notwithstanding its mildness, it subjects Christians to much greater inconveniencies, than this single one of being immersed once in their lives in the water. It requires them *to deny themselves, and take up their crosses, and follow Christ*: and what good man will say that these precepts are any just imputation on the mildness of the Christian institution? But it will be replied, that whatever is painful in those precepts arises, not out of the gospel, but the opposition it meets with. True. And you will give me leave to observe also with respect to Baptism, that the chief of what is irksome in it arises, not out of the institution itself, but the contempt in which it is generally held. Admitting, however, that there is something disagreeable to nature in the immersion of the body in the water, that “it agitates the spirits,” and throws a kind of gloom over the minds of spectators: yet these circumstances, instead of being a real objection to this mode of baptizing, do the more clearly evince the fitness and propriety of it; since the general intent of the ordinance is to express our death



death and burial with Christ. And though it may so happen in some few cases (I say few, because I am sure such instances are not general) that “the mind is discomposed, and rendered “unfit for the exercise of proper thoughts and “affections;” yet that hurry of the spirits is very transient, and the moral and spiritual purposes of the institution are not thereby defeated. And after all, the little uneasiness which persons may be supposed to endure, is abundantly compensated by the pleasure which arises from the answer of a good conscience towards God, and the testimony they hereby give of their sincere affection to Christ. — As to what our Author farther adds, concerning the *impossibility* of administering the ordinance by immersion in some countries for want of water, the objection is so idle, that it scarce requires an answer. If, however, those travellers he speaks of, who cannot get water to quench their thirst, happen to be Pædobaptists, they will, I suppose, be at much the same loss to get their children sprinkled, as the Antipædobaptists to be immersed.

I am afraid, Sir, I have wearied you with this long letter; and the rather as most of the arguments advanced in this chapter are of such a kind, that a considerate reader can scarce avoid perceiving, at first view, their weakness and futility.

tility. But, when you reflect that they are popular topics, and that, when addressed to the passions, they have usually a mighty effect, you will excuse my having taken these pains to expose them.

I am,

Sir, &c.

## L E T T E R IV.

Dear S I R,

**H**AVING considered our Author's presumptive arguments against immersion, and shewn them to be totally groundless, we proceed now to the main question, respecting the true and proper meaning of the word *Baptize*, which is the subject of his third chapter. Mr. *A.* has not indeed expressly told us, whether he thinks it signifies to wash by sprinkling, or pouring only; or to wash, indifferently, either by sprinkling or plunging. It should seem, from the distinction he makes between βαπτω and βαπτίζω, from his so clearly apprehending that sprinkling was the ancient scriptural mode, and from his observing concerning passages wherein Baptism is spoken of, that there is not a word of immersion or dipping in them; it should seem, I say, from hence, that he is of opinion the word properly and only signifies to sprinkle, or to wash by sprinkling. And in that case he must consider those as violating our Saviour's command, who administer the ordinance by dipping. But I am rather inclined to think, from the general drift

40 *The meaning of the word Baptize.*

of his reasoning, and particularly from his argument towards the close of this chapter, concerning *diverse washings*, that he understands the word in the latter sense, as signifying *to wash*, indifferently, either *by plunging* or *sprinkling*: so that, whatever be the result of the debate between him and me, you see, Sir, our practice of immersion is, upon his principles, sufficiently justified. On this ground, therefore, as considering the mode perfectly indifferent, I am to meet him; and to prove, on the contrary, that the word *Baptize*, properly and only signifies *dipping*, or *such washing as includes dipping in it*.

As Mr. *A.* apprehends the two words βαπτω and βαπτίζω differ in their signification, it will be proper, before we proceed, to consider what he has to say in support of this opinion, and to shew, on the contrary, that they are synonymous. He tells us, that “all who are acquainted with the original language of the New Testament, must not only know that there is a difference between primitive and derivative words, but likewise that those in ζω are frequently diminutives; so that as βαπτω signifies to wash, βαπτίζω is to wash a little (*d*).” Admitting, for a moment, that this criticism of Mr. *A.*'s were just, it would not surely warrant the consequence he draws from it. For how

*The meaning of the word Baptize.* 41

does it follow from the verbs in ζω being frequently diminutives, that the verb βαπτίζω must be so? He should have first proved that all the verbs in ζω are diminutives, and then his conclusion in this particular instance would have been just. But I will venture to affirm, Sir, that there are a vast number of derivatives, and of derivatives in ζω too, which signify the same as their primitives. Wherefore our Author's assertion, that βαπτίζω signifies *to wash a little*, is rather hasty and inconsiderate. Nay, so far is the word from being a diminutive, that some learned men have considered it as a frequentative, and supposed that it signifies *to dip over and over again* (f). So that in their opinion, it retains precisely the same sense of dipping, or of washing by dipping, with its primitive βαπτω. This will also clearly appear from the instances I shall by and by refer to. To which I will add, that some of our most considerable opponents, by arguing promiscuously from both words, seem to admit that their meaning is synonymous. Nor yet do I wish, by confounding the two words, to evade any argument drawn from the use of either of them, that may seem at all unfavourable to immersion; and shall therefore attend to our Author's reasoning on each of them separately.

(f) So Tertullian seems to have taken it, when he rendered it by *mergitare*; as also Vossius and Stephens.

Let

## 42. *The meaning of the word Baptize.*

Let us now proceed, first, to consider what Mr. *A.* has advanced in support of his sense of the word *Baptize*; and, secondly, by a few plain reasons to establish that which I have given of it.

FIRST, as to Mr. *A.*'s sense of the word: he seems to be of opinion, as I said before, that it signifies *to wash*, indifferently, either *by plunging* or *sprinkling*. And,

1. With respect to βαπτω, he tells us, "It has been often acknowledged that it signifies *to wash* in general, either by dipping, or in any other way (*g*)."  
As our Author admits that it signifies *to wash by dipping*, so far we are agreed. But he insists that it signifies also *to wash in any other way*. Now what proof does he give us of this? Why, he tells us, that the word "occurs in some places where there is not the least appearance of dipping (*b*)."  
In support of this assertion he has, however, produced only one passage; which, though he lays great stress upon it, will, I am persuaded upon examination, fail him. It is the use which the Septuagint version makes of the word βαπτω in the case of Nebuchadnezzar, *Dan. v. 21. His body WAS WET (ελαση) with the dew of heaven.* Upon which he observes that the word is here

(*g*) Page 17.

(*b*). Ibid.

used “to describe the fall of the dew upon him; “and that he was wet, washed, or baptized “with the dew, not as being plunged in it, “but as it distilled, or fell in small drops upon “him (i).” But, with our Author’s leave, the word εβαπον is not used to describe the action of the dew as distilling or falling upon him, but to express the state of Nebuchadnezzar’s body, which was, as it were, dipped or plunged in dew. Now it is very remarkable, as Dr. Gale has largely shewn in his answer to Mr. Wall; that the original Chaldee word טבול, which is here rendered by εβαπον, necessarily implies dipping, as appears by the constant use of the word; and that it is by this Chaldee word the Jerusalem Targum renders the Hebrew לבל, Lev. iv. 6. which also unquestionably signifies to dip. So that Daniel himself chusing to describe the state Nebuchadnezzar was in, as all over wet with dew, by his being, as it were, dipped in it; the Septuagint very properly translated the Chaldee original by εβαπον. From this view of the passage, it appears evident to me, that βαπτω, even here, retains its natural and proper sense; or however that Mr. A. is too hasty in saying that “there is not in this place the “least appearance of dipping.” And after all, admitting that there is a difficulty in this passage, it is to be observed that the word, in most other

(i) Page 18.

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places where the Septuagint use it, so necessarily signifies dipping, that it is impossible for our Author, or any one else, to give it a different meaning; nor indeed can it be satisfactorily proved, in any one instance, that *that* idea is excluded from the word (*k*). It follows therefore that Mr. *A.* has not made good his assertion, that βαπτω signifies *washing in any way*. — We proceed now to consider what our Author has to say,

2. To the word βαπτίζω. Here, Sir, he seems to think his chief strength lies; and it is highly fit, as that is the case, that he should have his full scope. I will therefore take no advantage of what was observed before, to prove that the two words are synonymous; but consider him with as much attention, as if it were admitted that their meaning might be various. As, indeed, he chuses to examine them separately, he should have given us notice of his transition from the one to the other, and not abruptly passed from Nebuchadnezzar to the Israelites, without telling us he had dismissed the primitive, and was beginning with the derivative. This inattention to method is, however, easily to be accounted for, by the sudden effect which the likeness between these two Baptisms might have upon Mr. *A.*'s imagination, and the pleasure he very pro-

(*k*) See Gale against Wall, p. 140.



bably felt from the irrefragable proof thence arising to the divine authority of sprinkling.

His first passage then to prove that βαπτίζω signifies *to wash a little*, and of consequence that the ordinance is more properly administered by sprinkling than by immersion, is this of 1 Cor. x. 2. in which the Apostle tells us, that the Israelites *were baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea.* Upon these words Mr. A. observes that “the  
“ cloud descended in a plentiful rain upon them,  
“ and the waves of the sea sprinkled them as  
“ they passed along (1).” So that from our Author’s own account of the matter they were *washed a great deal*, not *a little*. As therefore they were in much the same state with Nebuchadnezzar, covered all over with the cloud and the sea, as he was with the dew; there seems the same propriety in the Apostle’s using the word βαπτίζω here, as in the Septuagint’s using βαπτίω in Daniel. And what strengthens the idea, or however would strengthen it in the apprehension of an ordinary reader, is the Apostle’s adding that they were baptized *in the cloud and in the sea*: the most natural and proper rendering of the particle *en* that could possibly be given. But Mr. A. has a way of evading this objection by telling us, “it might have been rendered *by or at.*” Since however, the meaning of particles depends very

(1) P. 18.

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much upon the connexion they stand in, he should have given us his reasons for this freedom in the present case, and not have put his reader off with an expectation of some general discussion of the question concerning particles elsewhere. The truth is, it better served his purpose to translate it *by* or *at*; and that, in the eye of prejudice, is a reason of no small strength. But let any one judge which interpretation is most natural, even upon the view our Author had himself given us of the passage. He had told us that “the cloud  
“descended in a plentiful rain upon them, and  
“that the waves of the sea sprinkled them,” I suppose on each side. And what then? Why, this having been their situation, he would have the Apostle tell us, that they *were washed a little*, or that *they were sprinkled by or at the sea*. On the contrary, I say, *they were immersed or plunged in the cloud and in the sea*. I fancy Mr. *A.* and most other people, when a plentiful rain has descended on them, are apt to speak of themselves as having been *in* a shower, if not immersed in it. It does not follow then from this passage that βαπτίζω will admit of the sense for which our Author contends.—And here I would remind you again, Sir, that it lies upon Mr. *A.* to prove, in the texts he cites, that the word not only *may* signify sprinkling, or washing by sprinkling, but that that sense of it is *necessarily* included in those passages; or else his argument is not conclusive.

We

We go on then to the next instance he produces to that end, and that is the words of the evangelist Mark, who, speaking of the Pharisees, says, ch. vii. 4. *When they come from the market, except they wash (βαπτισωσιν) they eat not. And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing (βαπτισμους) of cups and pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.* Now Mr. A.'s reasoning from this passage, if I rightly understand him, is this;—first, That the purifications required in the Jewish law were performed by sprinkling, and that therefore the words βαπτίζω and βαπτισμος must here be understood of sprinkling: and—secondly, That, from the particular circumstances of the cases here mentioned, it would be absurd to understand them in this place in any other sense.

First, as to the Jewish washings for purification; he says, “they were order’d to be performed by sprinkling (m).” It is needless to follow our Author through all the passages he has, or might have, cited from the law of Moses wherein sprinkling is mentioned. The question is, whether the legal purifications were performed by sprinkling *only*; or *so generally* in that way, as that wherever their Baptisms are refer’d to, it would be absurd or improper to say that immersion or plunging was meant. This surely

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Mr. *A.* will not affirm. On the contrary, it may be easily shewn that in their purifications they frequently washed their hands and their feet, and, in many cases, their whole bodies in water. Thus, as to the consecration of the priests, Mr. *A.* indeed chuses to tell us only of “Moses’s pouring the anointing oil upon the head of Aaron to sanctify him;” but the context of that passage tells us also that *Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water, Lev. viii. 12, 6.* And in the parallel passage, *Exod. xxix. 4.* where Moses is commanded to wash them, Jonathan renders טָבַל *to dip, thou shalt dip them in forty measures of spring water.* And though Mr. *A.* thinks it strange that any “should infer from the account given us, *2 Chron. iv. 6.* concerning the molten sea, that the priests were to be plunged in it (n);” yet, when he reflects on its size, that it contained near 1000 barrels of water, and that the text says, *the sea was for the priests to wash in* בָּו, his wonder will, methinks, cease. Nor will the general order he refers to, *Exod. xxx. 19.* wherein mention is only made of their washing their hands and feet at the laver when they went into the tabernacle, admit of a conclusion that at their consecration, and on other occasions, they were not plunged in it. And as to the unclean person mentioned *Numb. xix. 8.* whose purification, it should seem

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from Mr. A.'s brief account of it, was performed merely by sprinkling the holy water upon him; the very next verse (which, not being to his purpose, he prudently passes over) tells us, that *on the seventh day he was to purify himself, and wash his cloathes, and bathe himself in water, and so be clean.* This was the day of cleansing, and this ceremony the chief part of his purification. It is here also to be observed, that the original word used in this place for *bathing*, is the same that is used in the story of Naaman to express his *dipping* in Jordan.—And now, as it thus clearly appears that the Jewish purifications were *not ordered to be performed by sprinkling only*, but chiefly by bathing or dipping; it follows, that βαπτίζω and βαπτισμος, in this passage, are not necessarily to be understood of sprinkling or pouring water. Yet,

Secondly, our Author still objects, “it seems  
“utterly incredible that the Pharisees should  
“plunge their whole bodies in water before  
“every meal, or that they should dip their ta-  
“bles and beds at all (o).” But Mr. A. here supposes what we are not obliged to maintain (p).

(o) P. 20.

(p) That, however, there were those among the Jews who daily washed their whole bodies, appears from a passage quoted from Josephus, page 19th of these Letters. And Tertullian says, *Though the Jews daily wash every part of the body, yet they are never clean.*

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The plain facts the Evangelist means to report, in the third and fourth verses, are, that the Pharisees were used always to wash their hands before their meals; and that, if at any time when they came from the market they were extraordinarily defiled, they washed their whole bodies. This account of their common and their extraordinary purifications is very natural and pertinent. Whereas it should seem little better than a tautology for the sacred Historian to say in the third verse, that except they wash their hands oft they eat not, and to add immediately in the fourth verse, that when they come from the market, except they wash their hands they eat not. Now, I hope, it is not “utterly incredible” that they should plunge their whole bodies in water on occasion of extraordinary defilement, since, as we have seen just before, *that* was what the law of Moses required. And if the Pharisees, zealous for the traditions of the elders, refined upon this law, and obliged persons in such cases instantly, and before they eat any thing, to practice this ceremony; nay, if by their explanation of the law respecting defilement, they made the occasions of such immersion much more frequent than Moses had done, is there any thing at all in this to be wondered at? And, for the confirmation of the sense I have given of the passage before us, I will add the comment of the great Grotius upon it, *They clean-*  
*fed*

sed themselves, says he, with greater care from any defilement they got by touching another at market; for in such case they purified themselves, not by washing the hands only, but by immersing the body (q). And Beza observes, that βαπτίζεσθαι in this place is more than χερσικλείειν; for it should seem the former is to be understood of the whole body, the latter only of the hands (r). It is not then incredible that the Evangelist should mean by βαπτισώμεθα in the fourth verse that they were immersed or plunged in water (s).

And now, as to their washing their hands, in the third verse; though Mr. A. will not say it is absolutely incredible, that that should be done by dipping them in water, yet he thinks he can prove, from the story of Elisha's pouring water on the hands of Elijah, 2 Kings iii. 11. that the hands

(q) Majori cura se purgabant a fori contactu, quippe non manus tantum lavando, sed & corpus mergendo.

(r) Plus autem est βαπτίζεσθαι hoc in loco quam χερσικλείειν, quod illud videatur de corpore universo, istud de manibus duntaxat intelligendum.

(s) The Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Persian versions (as Dr. Gale hath observed, and as appears by the Polyglot) understand the words in a different sense, viz. *And what things they buy in the market, except they be washed, they eat not.* Which, if it be the sense of the passage, removes even the shadow of a difficulty; for no one can be at a loss what is the proper and natural way of washing herbs, and such other things as are usually bought at market.

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of the Pharisees also were washed by affusion or sprinkling. Not to speak of the distance of time between Elijah and Christ, or of Dr. Gale's very natural criticism upon this passage, that it might have been rendered, *who poured out water FOR* <sup>ἔνυ</sup>, not UPON, *the hands of Elijah*; I think it is pretty evident that it was the custom among the Jews, to wash their hands by dipping them in water. The more natural a custom is, the more general; and, I suppose, it strikes every one that this is the most natural way of washing the hands. Such is the practice among us, and, I fancy, in most other countries. Why then should we suppose, unless driven to it by necessity, that the Jews washed their hands (if it may be called washing them) by affusion or sprinkling? In the passage before us the words run thus, *except they wash their hands ἐνυμν to the elbow, or at least the wrist &c.* and surely such washing one would imagine should be by plunging. And the Evangelist John's account of our Saviour's washing the feet of his disciples most naturally agrees, I think, with this idea. *After that, says he, John xiii. 5. he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples feet.*

But if neither the washing the whole body, nor the hands, by dipping them in water, be incredible; yet surely "it is incredible," our Author thinks, "that they should wash their beds  
 "after



“after that manner.” But why should this seem so strange, since the law of Moses expressly directs, that *every vessel which is unclean, whether it be of wood, or raiment, or skin, or sack, should be put into water?* (βαφουσῆαι) Lev. xi. 32. And if the friends of the paralytick were at the pains to take him in his bed to the top of the house, and to let him down from thence into the room where Christ was; it is more than possible that the superstitious zeal of the Pharisees might induce them to be at the pains of putting their beds, when defiled, into the water. It would carry me too far, Sir, or I might mention many customs of theirs full as absurd, if not more so than this. And after all, there is no necessity of rendering the word κλινῆ *beds*, for it signifies also *tables*, as our Translators have rendered it.—Thus I think Mr. A.’s reasoning from this passage, upon which he and others lay so great a stress, is sufficiently shewn to be inconclusive.

There remains only one more passage to be considered, and which, as it is the last our Author produces, is I reckon in his opinion utterly incapable of being satisfactorily answered. It is the phrase of *diverse washings* (διαφοροῖς βαπτισμοῖς) Heb. ix. 10. To prove that it necessarily includes sprinkling in it, Mr. A. gives us the remark of a sensible writer upon it (whom yet he has not named) the whole of whose rea-

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soning.

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soning seems to be this, that as the phrase *διαφορα χαρισματα*, Rom xii. 6. has respect to the several species or kinds of gifts, such as prophecy, teaching, ruling, &c. of which *χαρισματα* is the genus; so the phrase of *διαφοροι βαπτισμοι* refers to the several species or modes of washing, such as sprinkling or plunging, of which *βαπτισμοι* is the genus. But whoever considers that this Author takes it for granted that *washings* is the proper rendering of *βαπτισμοι*, and so reasons from washings, as the genus, to sprinkling and plunging as the species; whoever I say considers this, will quickly perceive that his reasoning is fallacious. We insist that the proper meaning of the word *βαπτισμοι* is bathings or dippings: wherefore we may, with as good reason as this *sensible writer*, argue analogically from this other passage in Romans, and say, that as prophecy, teaching, ruling, &c. are the different species of the genus gifts; so the various plungings of priests, levites, and people, for consecration, defilement, &c. are the different species of the genus dippings or bathings. And what is the result of this reasoning? Why, that we are *in statu quo*, and that nothing is from hence to be argued either way. So that it cannot be proved from this passage, that *βαπτισμος* necessarily includes the idea of sprinkling. On the contrary, as the context does not oblige us to understand the word of sprinkling, and as its original and proper sense is

is dipping, or such a washing as is by dipping, it should rather seem that it here signifies bathing or dipping in water only (t).

Thus we have considered at large Mr. A.'s sense of the word *Baptize*, and I hope sufficiently made it appear, that the arguments he has adduced to prove that it signifies *to wash*, indifferently, either *by plunging or sprinkling*, are utterly inconclusive. But, that no doubt may remain as to the true meaning of the word, you will give me leave, Sir, with as much brevity as possible, to shew you,

(t) Spencer understands *διαφοροι* here as referring to the various sorts of persons cleansed, and the occasions of their cleansing.—*Alia enim erat Pontificis & Sacerdotum lotio, alia Levitarum, Israelitarum alia, &c.* Spencer de Leg. Heb. lib. 3. dissert. 3. p. 161. And Grotius, *Varias lotiones nominat, quia lotio alia erat Sacerdotum, alia Levitarum, &c.* And Whitby in loc.

Here I cannot help taking notice of a passage in Dr. Bentley's *Phileleutherus Lipsiensis*, though it be not directly to the purpose of clearing the sense of this text in the Hebrews. Having had occasion to quote a passage from Plutarch,—where he thinks the proper reading is *βαπτισμους* instead of *σαββατισμους*, he renders *βαπτισμους* without any hesitation *dippings*, telling us that *both word and thing* (as a religious rite) was *immemorially known in Greece*. Phil. Lip. p. 212, 213. 8th edit.

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SECONDLY, What abundant positive evidence we have that the sense I have given of it is just, *viz.* that it properly and only signifies *dipping, or such washing as includes dipping in it.*

Here, Sir, I shall appeal to the best Lexicographers and Criticks, to the purest Greek Authors, and to the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament. And if, beside their united testimony in favour of my assertion, it shall be found, that it is by no means absurd thus to render the word in any of the passages in the New Testament, that the circumstances attending the administration of the ordinance, as related in the Acts, and the frequent metaphorical allusions to it in the Epistles, do naturally and perfectly accord with this sense of the word; and, more than this, that most learned men, among the Pœdobaptists themselves, are clearly of opinion that the ancient and scriptural mode of baptizing was by immersion: if, I say, these points are made good, it will, I hope, be acknowledged that I have satisfactorily proved my assertion.

Constantine, Stephens, Hedericus, &c. all agree that its proper genuine sense is, *to dip, plunge, or overwhelm.* And though they give it the farther sense of *washing*, yet that sense is consequential of the former, as whatever is dipped in the water may be said to be washed.

Vossius

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Vossius says, *Though βαπτω and βαπτίζω are used to be translated, to dip or plunge, and then to dye; yet the word properly signifies to DIP, and only by a metaphors to dye, that is, as dying implies or supposes dipping (u). It were endless to cite authorities from Greek Authors to prove that such is the genuine sense of the word. A great number Dr. Gale has collected, in his answer to Mr. Wall, and made very large and pertinent remarks upon them; which, Sir, you will allow me to recommend to your perusal. I will, however, here insert two or three instances I have met with, which may serve as specimens of the rest. Sophocles, in one of his tragedies, introduces Minerva as saying to Ajax—but tell me this, hast thou DIPP'D (εβαψας) thy spear in the army of the Greeks (x)? Polybius, describing a sea-fight between the Carthaginians and Romans, wherein the former were conquerors, says—they SUNK (εβαπτίζον) many of the vessels of the Romans (y). And Plutarch, speaking of the extravagance of Otho, who was after-*

(u) Voss. Etymologic. in Baptism. Etsi autem βαπτω & βαπτίζω tum *mergo*, vel *mergito*, tum *tingo*, transferri soleant; propriè tamen *mergo* notat, & *μεγαληπτικας*, *tingo*.

(x) ——— αλλ' εκεινο μοι φρασον  
εβαψας εγχος ευ προς αργειων στρατω  
Ajace, v. 95.

(y)—η πολλα των σκαφων εβαπτίζον.  
Polyb. Hist. lib. 1. p. 74. Edit. Jans. 1670.

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wards a Roman Emperor, that he owed no less than fifty millions of drachmas; says, that he was OVERWHELMED (*βεβαπλισμενος*) in debt, or, as we should express it in our language, *was over head and ears in debt* (x). In the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, and the Apocrypha, which I have carefully examined, the words occur twenty-five times. In eighteen of those instances, Dr. Gale says; I think he might have said twenty, they undoubtedly mean to dip. As to the remaining five, two of them respect Nebuchadnezzar, whose case we have considered. That in Isaiah xxi. 4. clearly signifies *to overwhelm*. That in 2 Mac. i. 21. is best understood, and I think can only be properly understood, by referring to the primary idea of *dipping*. And that, Ecclesiasticus xxxiv. 25. as it respects the Jewish purifications, can by no means be proved, as hath already been shewn, to exclude the notion of *plunging*.

To all this positive proof, which one should expect would be satisfactory in most cases, I will add the concessions of several learned Pædo-baptists—concessions, I mean, not of a general kind, that immersion was the ancient scriptural mode (for of these there are a prodigious number) but concessions as to the true and proper meaning of the word. Calvin says, *The word*

(x) *περὶ ἀκισχιλίων μυριάδων ὀφλημάτων βεβαπλισμενος.* Plutarch. Galba, Tom. 3. p. 1504.

itself, baptize, signifies to DIP, and it is plain that the rite of dipping was used by the ancient church (a). Beza tells us the word βαπτίζω does not signify to wash, unless by consequence; for it properly denotes to IMMERSE for the sake of dipping (b). Grotius is clear, in his annotations on Matt. iii. 6. that the propriety of the word, as well as the places chosen for the administration of the ordinance, and the many allusions of the Apostles to it which cannot be refer'd to sprinkling, shews that it was the custom to administer it by PLUNGING, not by pouring water (c). Salmasius, who, notwithstanding the advantage which Milton gained over him in the famous dispute concerning Charles the First, was stiled by the great Casaubon *ad miraculum doctus*; says, *Baptism is IMMERSION, and was formerly celebrated according to the force and meaning of the word* (d). Mons. Bossuet, the bishop of Meaux, in defending the practice of withholding the cup in the

(a) —ipsum baptizandi verbum mergere significat, & mergendi ritum veteri ecclesiæ observatum fuisse constat. Calv. Instit. lib. 4. cap. 15. § 19.

(b) Bezae Annot. in Marc. vii. 4.

(c) Mersatione autem non perfusione agi solitum hunc ritum indicat & vocis proprietas, & loca ad eum ritum delecta Joh. iii. 23. Act. viii. 38. & allusiones multæ Apostolorum, quæ ad asperionem referri non possunt, Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12.

(d) Βαπτισμος immersio est, & secundum vim ac notionem nominis olim celebrabatur. Vid. Wolfii Cuias Philol. in Mat. xxviii. 19.

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Lord's supper from the laity, urges upon the Reformed the inconsistency of their conduct in opposing the Romanists upon this matter, since they too pervert the other ordinance *by not plunging children in the water of baptism, as Jesus Christ was plunged in the river Jordan*; and adds, *To baptize signifies to PLUNGE, as is granted by all the world (e)*. To all which testimonies, that I may not tire you, Sir, I shall only add that of Dr. Towerson, who, in his explication of the catechism of the church of England, says, *The words of Christ are that they should baptize or DIP those whom they made disciples to Him (for so no doubt the word βαπτίζω properly signifies) &c. (f)*.

Thus, Sir, you see what positive proof we have that the words βαπτω and βαπτίζω do truly and properly signify *to dip*, or such washing as includes dipping in it; and what reason we have to conclude that this is its *only* meaning, since it cannot be proved, in any one instance our Author has produced to the contrary, that it necessarily signifies *to wash a little, or to wash by sprinkling or pouring water*. “Let the impartial, then, from these few remarks, judge,” to use Mr. A.’s words, “whether it be right to assert,”

(e) *Baptiser* signifie *plonger*, & tout le monde en est d'accord—Le Traité de Messire J. B. Bossuet de la communion sous les deux especes, Partie II. § 1 & 2.

(f) See Towerson's Explicat. &c. of Baptism, p. 20.

“that



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“ that dipping or plunging is the true and only  
“ import of the word Baptism in the sacred Scrip-  
“ tures; or, whether sprinkling or pouring is  
“ the ancient and scriptural mode of baptiz-  
“ ing.”

I am, Sir,

Yours.

L E T.

## L E T T E R V.

Dear S I R,

**W**E come now to Mr. *A.*'s fourth chapter, wherein he treats of *Baptisms recorded in the New Testament, which are supposed, by some, to have been administered by immersion.* These are the Baptisms of the Jews and our Saviour, by John; and of the Eunuch, by the Evangelist Philip. Now I presume, Sir, if the sacred Historians had only told us that [these persons were baptized, without mentioning any of the circumstances of their several Baptisms, you would have at once concluded from what has been said in the preceding letter, that they were immerged or plunged in water. The meaning of the word has, I hope, been satisfactorily ascertained. Nor can I tell how to imagine it possible, that when a rite of universal and perpetual use is to be established in the church, the great Legislator should chuse to express his will in ambiguous terms, and oblige his disciples to have recourse to mere circumstances to determine what is his true meaning. If the reasoning of the former letter has any force in it, this is not the case. Our  
 Lord

Lord could not have used a plainer word to convey his mind; and the general practice of the whole Christian church for *thirteen hundred years* \*, clearly shews, that there is not that difficulty in the question, which the zealous friends of aspersion would fain persuade the world there is. So that having settled the sense of the word, by a kind of proof as satisfactory, I should imagine, as any reasonable man can require; if that sense is genuine, we need not doubt but all the circumstances of the several Baptisms reported in the New Testament will very well accord with it. This I will be bold to affirm is the case. And if it should so happen that some of them are of such a kind as, of themselves, to determine nothing *either way*; the argument respecting immersion suffers nothing from hence: it stands as firm as ever. — Thus much premised, let us examine Mr. A.'s remarks on each of the Baptisms referred to in this chapter.

\* Dr. Whitby says, that *immersion was religiously observed by all christians for thirteen centuries.* See his Comment. on Rom. vi. 4.

The Bishop of Meaux also acknowledges, in the piece just now referred to, that it *may be made appear by the Acts of Councils, and by the ancient Rituals, that for thirteen hundred years Baptism was thus administered throughout the whole church, as far as was possible.* — nous pouvons faire voir par les Actes des Conciles, & par les anciens Rituels, que *treize cens ans* durant on a baptisé de cette sorte dans toute l'Eglise, autant qu'il a été possible.

1. As to the manner in which John baptized his disciples, our Author tells us, “ he has not yet met with satisfactory evidence that it was by immersion \*.” Lest, however, what happens not to be satisfactory to him should be so to others, he is willing to provide against that emergency, by reminding his Readers that “ John was no christian minister, nor his baptism a christian ordinance; and that therefore, if John did baptize by immersion, christians are not from thence obliged to be dipped or plunged||.” It is not at all to our purpose to enter into the question respecting the intent of John’s Baptism and our Saviour’s, nor into that respecting the converts at Ephesus, whether they were re-baptized by Paul — questions which have taken up a long page of our Author’s book. It will be sufficient to observe here, that the word *Baptize* must signify the same in our Saviour’s commission to his disciples, as it does in the story of John. If therefore the true and proper meaning of it be, as I have shewn in the former letter, to immerse or dip, then whatever difference there might be in the intent or end of the two Baptisms, they must be both similar in regard of the mode of administration. But if Mr. A. will insist, notwithstanding all that has been said, that the meaning of the word is doubtful, and that the question as to the mode of Baptism depends entirely on the circumstances attending the admi-

\* P. 23. § 1.

|| P. 24.

nistration of it, as related in Scripture; still it may be asked, why should the supposed difference between the intent of John's and of Christ's Baptism infer a difference as to the manner of administering them? If John performed the ordinance by immersion, it is surely natural to conclude the Apostles did: nay, if we are not expressly assured to the contrary, it is certain they did, since the same word is used to describe the institution in the one case, as in the other. And, after all, such sort of reasoning as this, tending to confound the Baptisms of Christ and John, comes with a very ill grace from that pen, which takes so much pains to carry us much farther back than John, and to fix a resemblance between Christian Baptism and Jewish sprinklings.—And now let us see what are our Author's reasons for supposing, that John did indeed baptize by sprinkling. They had need, surely, be very clear and convincing, since the circumstances of the story are so plain, that (besides the consideration of the true and natural meaning of the word Baptize) it is scarce possible, methinks, an unprejudiced reader of his Bible should hesitate a moment at the fact, that John administered the sacred rite by immersion.

His first reason is, that “the mode of sprinkling or pouring water best agrees with that of  
“ the

“ the effusion of the spirit upon the apostles on  
 “ the day of Pentecost; to which he supposes  
 “ John refers when he says, *I baptize you with*  
 “ *water unto repentance; but he that cometh after me*  
 “ *shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with*  
 “ *fire \*.*” This sort of reasoning by analogy  
 Mr. A., upon some occasions, does not at all ap-  
 prove of; as particularly when we tell him of our  
 Saviour’s *having a Baptism to be baptized with (n)*,  
 and that the mode of immersion applied to his  
 sufferings in that passage, conveys a far more  
 striking idea of them than that of sprinkling.  
 No, says he, “ the terms are certainly figurative,  
 “ and it is not easy to ascertain their precise  
 “ meaning; every hypothesis, therefore, found-  
 “ ed upon this passage, must be very precarious.  
 “ A strong imagination, or a prejudiced mind,  
 “ may find an object, and then point out a re-  
 “ semblance in many particulars, but no reader  
 “ of judgment and caution will strain so obscure  
 “ an allusion (o).” And when he is farther  
 told of our being *buried with Christ in Baptism*,  
 which plainly fixes a resemblance between *his*  
 burial in the sepulchre, and *ours* in the water by  
 immersion, he is so offended with this analogical  
 kind of reasoning, that he will not allow the  
 Apostle hath any reference to the death and bu-  
 rial of Christ; but if we will have it he refers  
 to something, that it must be to the Christian’s

\* Page 25. (n) Luke xii. 50. (o) Page 37.

death unto sin, and revival to God and righteousness. And still perceiving the resemblance in this last instance is as strong as in the former, and that therefore this evasion will not at all avail him; he at once with great address eludes the objection, by totally obliterating all idea of a burial, and substituting in the room of Baptism, so represented, *the washing of regeneration*, “which, “adds he, the Apostle says, he hath poured out “upon us\*.” Such is our Author’s bitter antipathy on some occasions to allusions, and such his skilful management of them, when they stand in his way, or give him any the least disturbance!

Yet, in the instance before us, this allusive reasoning pleases him well; and he thinks he sees so perfect a resemblance between the descending of fire upon the Apostles and John’s sprinkling his disciples, that it is almost demonstrable from hence, that sprinkling is the true mode of Baptism. And now, if I had no other method of escaping the force of this argument, but the using Mr. A.’s weapons, and at the same time had not the ingenuity to acknowledge my weakness; I should say to him, ‘You mistake, Sir; the allusion here is not to the Baptism of fire, but to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit; and therefore, as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit is called

\* Page 42—45.

the washing of regeneration, and that washing is by bathing or dipping, John's Baptism was by dipping.' Thus, Sir, should I cast dust before your eyes, as our Author has done, and then triumph in the mighty victory I had gained. But these are not the weapons of our warfare. If we cannot convince by plain reasoning from the word of God, we will not have recourse to the little arts of shuffling and evasion.

The account I have to give of the passage in debate is this; "I indeed plunge you in water, " but He that comes after me shall plunge you " in fire; the fire of the Spirit, or spiritual fire. " Therein shall ye be laid, like gold in the fire, " in order to its being refined." My reasons for this interpretation, which is, if I mistake not, abundantly warranted by Scripture, and the particular connexion in which the words stand; I say, my reasons for this interpretation I shall give by and by, when we come to the close of Mr. *A.*'s seventh chapter, where he more largely discusses this argument. In the mean while, I ask, Sir, Is there any absurdity or manifest impropriety in this explanation of the words? If, however, Mr. *A.* will insist there is, and that this allusion to fire necessarily obliges us to conclude that John administered Baptism by sprinkling, he must be at the pains to defend a much more forced and unnatural interpretation of the plainest historical facts that could be related, concerning the man-  
ner



ner of his baptizing his disciples. This indeed he does attempt ; but before we come to inquire how he succeeds, we must take notice of another presumptive kind of argument he has to advance in favour of John's having baptized by aspersion.

“ Indeed it ought to be remembered,” he tells us, “ that John was of the line of the priests, “ who had been always used to perform their “ purifications by sprinkling, and therefore it is “ not to be supposed he would exchange that “ ancient mode for dipping (o).” But how strange is it that our Author, who will not admit that John's mode of baptizing by immersion, if that is proved to have been his mode, is obligatory on us Christians ; that he should be so fond of making the Jewish sprinklings an example to John ! The short and plain answer, however, to this is, that the Jewish purifications were not by sprinkling *only*, or *chiefly* ; for the main part of their purifications were, as I have already shewn, by bathing or dipping. So that if John did make the Jewish customs his pattern, it was more natural to expect he should baptize by immersion than aspersion. And, whereas Mr. *A.* is at a loss where to find any *express command* John ever received to dip, I refer him to

(o) Page 26.

John i. 33. where he himself tells us that *he was sent to BAPTIZE with water.*

And now, Sir, let us see how our Author evades the force of that evidence in favour of immersion, which arises from the plain historical circumstances related concerning his Baptism. Here I would observe, before we proceed, that we do not lay the stress of the argument upon these circumstances: it is enough for us, that they exactly accord with what we have proved to be the true and proper meaning of the word *Baptize*. So that though it were admitted, that the sense our opponents would put on all or either of the circumstances of John's Baptism is a possible one, it will not from thence follow that he baptized by sprinkling. But, I am persuaded, the sense we affix to the words, every unprejudiced reader will acknowledge is the most probable, natural, and proper. To begin then with the particle *ex*; which, Sir, do you think is the most plain and obvious rendering of it, John baptized *in* Jordan, or *with* Jordan? You will at once say the former. Take; however, the particle in either sense, it will agree with the idea of immersion, but not with that of sprinkling; unless you say the Jews stood *in* Jordan, whilst the Baptist sprinkled them, which, if that were the mode, was by no means necessary. “ But  
“ it

“ it signifies also *by* (that is, of the instrument)  
“ and *at*.” Be it so: it is still true of John, if he  
baptized by immersion, that he baptized *by* or *at*  
Jordan. To what purpose then is all this arith-  
metick labour? “ It is more than a hundred times  
“ in the New Testament rendered *at*; and in  
“ an hundred and fifty others, it is translated  
“ *with* (*m*).” And what then? Mr. *A.*’s criticism  
will avail him little, till he has been at the far-  
ther trouble of collecting the number of times it  
occurs in the other senses, and has then cast up  
the sum total of all, and told us which has the  
majority. And even then, if it should turn out  
in favour of *at* or *with*, he has not proved that  
John did not baptize *in* Jordan. But I am a-  
shamed, Sir, of this trifling —

The places where John baptized, come next  
to be considered. *They were all baptized of him,*  
says Mark, *in the river Jordan, confessing their*  
*sins* (*o*). Now what plain reader, who is un-  
versed in the subtilties of controversy, and has  
no point to maintain at all events, but would  
conclude from this passage that the Jews were  
dipped in Jordan, as Naaman was of old in the  
same river? But if he could be supposed to have  
a doubt upon the matter, another Evangelist  
would instantly remove that doubt, by giving  
him this plain reason for John’s baptizing also in

(*m*) Page 27.      (*o*) Mark i. 5.

Enon near Salim, *because there was much water there* (i). But however it may be with the plain Reader, Mr. A. has still his doubts: "He cannot, upon an attentive and impartial inquiry into the several circumstances of the case, find in it any the least evidence of John's baptizing by immersion \*." What shall we do then to convince him? In what plainer language would he have the story related to that end? "Oh! it should not have been said *πολλα υδατα*, for that may mean "many streams or rivulets." Well, but this very phrase the Septuagint Version uses to describe the great river Euphrates, or however those branches of it, upon which the mighty Babylon stood (k); and surely he will not say that that river or that those branches of it were streams or rivulets. By this remark Dr. Doddridge confirms the sense he gives of the phrase, telling us that *nothing surely can be more evident than that πολλα υδατα signifies a large quantity of water, it being sometimes used for the river Euphrates. To which, adds he, I suppose there may also be an allusion, Rev. xvii. 1, &c. where the voice of many waters does plainly signify the roaring of a high sea* (l). And Dr. Whitby expressly applies the reasoning of the Evangelist to our argument, by thus paraphrasing the words, "There was much water there," in which their

(i) John iii. 23. \* P. 27. § 3. (k) Jer. li. 13. Septuagint. (l) See Doddridge in loc.

whole bodies might be dipped; for in this manner only was the Jewish Baptism performed, by a descent into the water, Acts viii. 38. and an ascent out of it, v. 39. and a burial in it, Rom. vi. 3, 4. Col. ii. 12 (m). And if it were farther necessary to establish the rendering of the phrase in our Bibles, I might refer Mr. A. to a similar one, Rev. viii. 3. θυμιαματα πολλα, which surely is best, and only, to be translated *much incense*.

And now, what has our Author to oppose to this clear circumstantial evidence that John baptized by immersion? Why, he gravely tells us, “in the first place, that it is no where said he plunged any one of his disciples in these waters (n); though we are twice told he did in the very passage he refers to: which he will find to be the fact, if he will consult the passage, and calmly consider the reasoning of the Letter preceding this.—But, you will ask him perhaps, if he did not plunge his disciples in the water, why is it said he chose this place above others *because* there was much water there? Mr. A.’s ingenuity at once supplies an answer, “He might take the hint for baptizing” in this place preferable to others, “from an order given to the priests of old, who were commanded to take the unclean leper to a running water, and there sprinkle upon him

(m) See Whitby in loc.

(n) Page 27.

“ that was to be cleansed from his leprosy seven  
 “ times,” Lev. xiv. 4—7. (o) But, pray Sir,  
 why may not I be ingenious too? and say, that  
 he might take the hint for immersing his disci-  
 ples, from the eighth verse of that very context  
 he refers to, where the leper is required *to wash  
 himself in water*. And since Naaman was a leper,  
 and was healed of his leprosy by dipping in Jor-  
 dan, why may not I farther suppose, that John  
 from hence took *two hints*, the one of the place  
 Jordan, and the other of the action dipping?  
 —But, if *these* suppositions will not supply the  
 place of solid argument, Mr. *A.* has others;  
 “ John would naturally chuse a situation the  
 “ most proper for the accommodation of his  
 “ hearers.” Now “ Enon’s many streams would  
 “ not only afford an agreeable refreshment, but  
 “ be indispensably necessary to this great multi-  
 “ tude in so warm a climate, especially in the  
 “ summer season (*p*).” And why may not I  
 again set my invention on the stretch, and say,  
 that as it was a warm climate, and a hot and  
 sultry season, John might think it more con-  
 ductive to the health and refreshment of his hear-  
 ers to bathe them in the water, and therefore  
 preferred this mode to sprinkling? But, I hope,  
 you will excuse my thus imitating the unhal-  
 lowed arts of sophistry, though it be only with  
 a view to expose them.

(o) Page 27, 28.

(p) Ibid.

To return: you will say, perhaps, our Author has quite lost sight of the plain end, for which, and for which *alone*, the Evangelist mentions John's having baptized in Enon. No, Sir, he has not. That place Mr. *A.* tells us he the rather chose, as it enabled him “the more expeditiously to baptize his followers by pouring water upon them (*q*).” But surely the reason, in regard both of convenience and expedition, is much stronger in favour of immersion than sprinkling. And as to what he adds, of “the high improbability of his baptizing this vast multitude by immersion; of modesty's forbidding his plunging them all naked; and of the great unlikelihood of their having proper changes of apparel with them (*r*);” I reply—We are nowhere told, that it was a few days or a few weeks only, that John was thus employed baptizing in the wilderness:—he might immerse the people with very near as little expence of time, if not trouble, as sprinkle them; especially as Mr. *A.* is of opinion he had “no utensils with him” for that purpose:—Luke says, the multitude came forth *to be* baptized of him (*s*); so that their submission to this sacred rite, was not such a surprize upon them as our Author would insinuate:—and as to the business of clothes, they might easily be furnished with them, as bathing was much used among the Jews; and the Essenes, as Josephus

(*q*) Page 28.    (*r*) Page 29.    (*s*) Luke iii. 7.

reports, every day before dinner dressed themselves in a linen habit, and so washed their bodies in water (s). These things considered, there does not appear to be that difficulty in the matter Mr. A. would insinuate. And now, Sir, tell me, whether the ingenious torture to which our Author has put this plain passage, *John baptized in Enon near Salim, because there was much water there*, has any the least effect to reconcile you to the sense he would affix to it, or to the practice of aspersion to which he would fain accommodate it?—We proceed,

2. To Mr. A.'s observations on our Saviour's Baptism by John \*. I am glad, Sir, you are not likely to be detained long here, as I think your patience must already have been sufficiently tried with the trifling objections urged under the former head. The sacred Historian informs us, that *Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straight-way out of the water*, that is out of Jordan (t). From whence you and I should be apt to infer, that He was *in* Jordan, and that He was plunged in it too, since *that*, as I have shewn, is the true and proper meaning of the word baptize. But our Author, throwing the word *baptize* out of the question, makes the whole argument in favour of immersion to rest upon the phrase of our Saviour's *coming up out of* Jordan,

(s) As we have seen p. 29. of these Letters. \* P. 30.  
 § 4. (t) Mat. iii. 16.





which he tells us will not admit of so “hasty  
“an inference,” as that He was plunged in it (u).  
But, I know not who, Sir, says that his coming  
out of the water signifies, or even necessarily in-  
fers, his being plunged in it. It is enough for us  
that his coming out of it proves that He was in  
it; and that if He was in it, it must have been  
for the purpose the Evangelist had mentioned  
of his being baptized, that is, immersed in it.  
The dispute therefore turns upon the meaning  
of the phrase *αὐτὸς ἀπὸ* *He went up out of*: and  
yet there can be no just reason assigned for find-  
ing fault with the sense our Translators have  
given this plain phrase, except that of its mani-  
festly favouring the idea of immersion. Left,  
however, what he had to say upon the matter  
should not satisfy his Readers, Mr. A. has pru-  
dently diverted their attention for a while to an-  
other account of our Saviour’s Baptism, which  
better suits his purpose than that of the inspired  
Historian, and of which, as he has thrown it  
into a note, I shall take notice below (x). Well,  
but

(u) Page 30.

(x) The story Mr. A. tells us, that “the Lord Jesus  
“Christ entered into the sea, and John with all humility  
“baptized Him with his hand, and washed Him, by cast-  
“ing water on his head;” this story, I say, is certainly very  
much to our Author’s purpose. It wants only one little  
circumstance to render it decisive in the present debate,  
and that is, authenticity. I won’t pretend to say, that  
there is no “ancient eastern history of Christ, written in  
“Persic;” but I do not know it, nor can I get any ac-

but what is the meaning of the phrase? “It is used, says Mr. A. to describe his return from the water-side.” Not that he takes *aveen* to signify *he returned*: he admits that it signifies his *ascending* or *coming up*; but would fain divert the word from any reference it might seem to have to our Saviour’s having been in the water. To this purpose he tells us, “Jordan like other rivers, probably (he might have said, certainly) ran in the lower ground.” And what then? Does this prove that our Lord was only at the brim of Jordan, and not in it? Whatever river He had been in, it would have been proper to describe his coming out of it by this

count of it from the books and friends I have consulted. If however there be such a history, Mr. A. will do well to favour the Christian world with an account of it. Till then, whatever weight his story may have with the weak and credulous, he can’t wonder that others consider it in the light of one of those old wives fables, which the Apostle exhorts Timothy to reject.

As to the word  *agnmedh* (not *anada* as Mr. A. has it) used in the Syriac and Arabic gospel for baptizing; as strong an inference may be drawn from it in favour of immersion, as of aspersion. The word is derived from the Hebrew  *stetit*, and is found, when put for baptizing, in Aphel; so that its proper signification is *to make* or *cause to stand*. And whether the making a person to stand, may not as properly be understood to refer to the raising him up in the water when immersed in it, as to “the setting him upright in a font,” in order to his having water poured upon him, I leave any one to judge.

word

word  $\alpha\nu\epsilon\epsilon\iota\eta$ ; and that is sufficient for us. “But we know, says he, that there are hills near Jordan.” So then, according to Mr. *A*, the sacred Historian meant to inform us, that when Christ was baptized He went up the hills near Jordan. And what follows a verse or two after? Why, *He was led up*, that is, from these hills, *into the wilderness*. I can readily enough agree with our Author, that “Jordan, like other rivers, probably ran in the lower ground;” but am at a loss, I acknowledge, to conceive with the like ease of a wilderness situated above hills. Such pains do men take to confound the plainest sense, in order to serve a purpose!—But though Mr. *A*. can make nothing of the verb  $\alpha\nu\epsilon\epsilon\iota\eta$ , yet he thinks he can of the preposition  $\alpha\pi\omicron$ . “That, he tells us, in scores of passages in the New Testament, signifies no more than *from*.” To prove this assertion, which no one will dispute, he produces four or five instances, and those too, that they may have the greater effect, from the Evangelist Matthew himself. But will these, or a score besides, prove that  $\alpha\pi\omicron$ , in the connexion it here stands, does not signify *out of*? Or if they will (which yet he does not pretend to assert) I ask, by what other particle, except this of  $\alpha\pi\omicron$ , or  $\epsilon\kappa$ , which he afterwards treats in much the same manner, the Evangelist *could* convey the idea of our Lord’s coming *out of* the water, if He really was in it, as we say, and every plain Reader

would suppose?—And now it remains that we consider,

3. The remarks our Author has to make on the Baptism of the Eunuch by Philip\*. *They went down,* says the sacred Historian, *both into the water, both Philip and the Eunuch, and he baptized him (y).* We say, and say very naturally upon this passage, that as the word *baptize* signifies to immerse; and as, in order to a person's being immersed, the administrator and the subject must both go into the water: so the plain fact before us exactly accords with this idea of the institution. All that Mr. A. however can gather from the story is, “that they went *to* the water, “and that Philip baptized the Eunuch. He “cannot find one word of the manner in which “he baptized him, whether by dipping him in “the water, or pouring the water upon him.” But, though our Author is unwilling to acknowledge that baptizing signifies immersing; yet he thinks the action of going into the water looks that way. His object therefore is, to make the preposition *es* signify *to*, instead of *into*. But, before he comes to give his reasons for this amendment of our translation, his business is to provide against the consequence of failing in the attempt. To that end he tells us, “that they might both “go into the water without being, either of

\* Page 32. § 5.

(y) Acts viii. 38.

“them,

“ them, plunged in it:” and “ that if the expression of their going down into the water necessarily includes dipping them; Philip was dipped as well as the Eunuch; for what is said of one is said of both ||.” But what unaccountable trifling is all this! Mr. *A.* surely is not serious! except in his wish to amuse and confound his Reader. What Baptist ever said, or thought, that persons cannot go into the water without being plunged in it? or, that the expression of going down into the water necessarily includes dipping in it? All they say is, that if Philip and the Eunuch went into the water, it must be for some purpose; and that *that* of the former’s immersing the latter, is much more natural and feasible than that of his taking up water and pouring it upon him: because *this* might as well be done without their going into the water, *that* could not. Our Author then might have spared his consequence, “ that Philip and the Eunuch must have been both dipped.” To shew him, however, more clearly the ridiculous absurdity both of his premises and his consequence, I will ask him what he would have been apt to say, if a Baptist had thus reasoned with him? “ Philip, Sir, and the Eunuch might *go to the water*, without having the water *sprinkled* on them: if the expression of their *going down to the water* necessarily implies *sprinkling*, then Philip was sprinkled as well as the Eunuch.”

And now, to prove that *eis* should here be rendered *to*, he cites a long train of passages wherein it sometimes signifies *to*, sometimes *in*, sometimes *for*, and sometimes *towards*. And what is the result of all this learned criticism? The utmost it proves is this, that it *may* signify *to*, not that it *must*. That it *must* he does not pretend, and even that it *may* is scarce probable, since by giving it that rendering we make the Evangelist say, *They came to a certain water*, and then presently, *they went down to it*.

As to the latter part of the story, *when they were come up out of the water*, Mr. A. reasons after much the same manner he had done before concerning our Saviour's Baptism. Lest therefore, in the first place, the word *ανεβυσαν* *they were come up*, should seem at all to favour the absurd practice of immersion, he has recourse, as under the former head, to the geography of the country. " Travellers and historians, says he, inform us, that this stream was only a  
 " small rivulet in a hilly country, which even  
 " lower down is sometimes dried up in summer,  
 " and the place at which Philip baptized the  
 " Eunuch is thought to have been at the foot  
 " of a mountain which is near its source." But why all this trouble? If he had insisted, as before, that streams as well as rivers flow in channels below the ground on either side of them;  
 and

and that therefore he who had been at the edge of the stream, when he returned from it, might be said to come up, we should not have disputed the matter with him. But since he is fond of fixing this stream at the foot of a mountain which is near its source, and so supposes them to have descended from the mountain and then to have ascended it again; one would be apt to ask, why they did not stop at the source, and perform the ceremony there, instead of giving themselves the trouble of going down to the brook in the bottom, and then climbing up the precipice again. Such, however, is the ingenious labour to which an unwillingness to admit a plain and easy fact exposes men! And now, having told us that their *coming up* had no respect to their having been in the water, his next concern is to prove, what no one has ever denied, that the preposition  $\epsilon\kappa$  sometimes signifies *from* as well as *out of*. But does it thence follow that *out of* is not the proper rendering of the particle here? Or if he is of opinion that neither  $\alpha\pi\omicron$  nor  $\epsilon\kappa$ , do, in the connexion we have been considering, sufficiently convey the idea for which we contend, he'll do well to tell us what Greek particle will.

Thus, Sir, I have considered our Author's observations upon the Baptism of the Jews, of our Saviour, and of Philip. These facts are related

in so simple and artless a manner, as are indeed all the narratives of the Bible, that I am persuaded no plain unprejudiced man can mistake them. Nor should I hesitate a moment to leave the decision of the question respecting immersion to the sentence of such a person. I am confident he would tell us, at the very first reading, that he cannot find any one circumstance at all leading to the idea of sprinkling; whereas they all of them exactly accord with that of immersion. Nor shall I in this opinion of mine be deemed hasty or presumptuous by the candid Reader, since the greater part of the most learned Pœdo-baptists, I had almost said all, have frankly acknowledged that John the Baptist and the Apostles did most unquestionably baptize after this manner.

I am,

Sir, &c.



## L E T T E R VI.

Dear S I R,

**O**UR Author's fifth chapter is taken up, as he tells us in the title of it, with the *examination of texts, in which some suppose there are allusions to immersion, as the original mode of baptizing.* The first he mentions is that in the Corinthians relating to the Israelites, who are said to have been baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. But, as that had been taken notice of in the third chapter (where also I have remarked upon it) he declines any farther consideration of it here. The three or four remaining passages, on which he chuses to insist particularly, we shall examine in the order he has placed them.

1. The first is that in Luke xii. 50. where our Lord says to his disciples, *I have a Baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitned till it be accomplished!* There can be no doubt but our Saviour had a view in these words to his approaching sufferings, and that He designed to express the greatness and pungency of them by this allusion to Baptism. It is natural therefore to

inquire what likeness there is between Baptism and suffering, or between the state of one baptized and that which Christ was in when under his last grievous and complicated sorrows. Now that mode of Baptism for which we contend, fixes a striking resemblance between the one and the other, as every one upon the least reflection must acknowledge. “As he who is baptized is immersed in water, so shall I be plunged in sufferings—be so overwhelmed with them that no part, neither soul nor body, shall be exempted from pain and misery.” Whereas, if we suppose sprinkling to be the mode of Baptism refer’d to, the description will lose much of its energy, and instantly become faint and languid, though not strictly absurd and improper. “As he who is baptized hath water sprinkled or poured upon him, so shall I have affliction and sorrow sprinkled or poured upon Me.” From the justness of the allusion therefore in the former view of it, we infer that this passage furnishes a probable collateral evidence, that Baptism was anciently administered by immersion. Thus we reason upon the text, without laying any other stress upon it, than the nature of all allusive or metaphorical language will warrant.

But Mr. *A.* instead of attempting to take off the force of this reasoning, by shewing the resemblance there is between aspersion and suffering,

ing, or by giving us some other sense of the text, that might better agree with the figurative language of it than that which the Baptists maintain; instead of this, I say, which was surely his proper business, he seems to aim at nothing but to confound his readers. He tells us, first of all, that our Lord “could not refer to his being “baptized of John, as He spoke these words “long after that event (a).” But who, I pray, ever said or thought He did? If, however, he means by this to insinuate, that He might possibly be baptized a second time, and that He had his eye in these words to that Baptism; he is not indeed the first that has reasoned in that way; for Epiphanius tells us of some such people in his time, and who of consequence would have stigmatized our Saviour with the opprobrious name of Anabaptist, which has been as unjustly given to many of his real disciples. He admits however that “our Lord speaks of scenes then “before Him; but whether in his life or at his “death, he is not certain. Indeed there was “nothing, as he apprehends, in the mode of his “sufferings, either in the garden of Gethse- “mane, at the bar of Pilate, or when He was “lifted up upon the cross, that resembled the “mode of plunging. Nor can he absolutely “say that his thoughts were confined merely to “those transactions through which He was to

(a) P. 37.

“ pass before his abasement in the grave (b).” So that one should suppose Mr. *A.* is of opinion, his thoughts extended beyond death to the grave; and in that case, that he meant to fix a resemblance between Baptism and his burial: a sense very favourable to immersion; and for which the Baptists are much obliged to our Author, it never having, I dare say, entered into the heads of any of them. But why all these pains, as I said before, to make so beautiful and striking a passage obscure, unless it be to amuse and confound?—Let us now proceed,

2. To the second allusive text Mr. *A.* quotes, “ the argument from which in favour of immersion,” he tells us, “ is equally groundless with the former.” The words are in 1 Pet. iii. 20, 21.—*the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls, were saved by water. The like figure whereunto, even Baptism, doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

There is, I acknowledge, a difficulty in fixing the precise meaning of this passage. Yet I am persuaded we shall find upon examination, that there is such an allusion in it to the primitive

(b) Ibid.

mode of Baptism as affords a very probable evidence in favour of immersion. It is agreed on all hands that Baptism is here spoken of as *αἰτί-  
τυπον* an antitype, that is, a figure which has respect to something that went before. But the question is, what that type is, to which Baptism is said to be an antitype. It cannot be the *ark*, because that being of the feminine gender, the relative *ὃ* will not agree with it. Nor is it likely it should be *water*, because, though *ὕδατος* is the immediate antecedent, it is scarce proper to say of Baptism that it is the figure of water, or the antitype to it. I therefore suppose that the relative *ὃ* has the whole preceding sentence for its antecedent. So that *Baptism*, as comprehending the subject, the mode, and the intent of the institution; is to be considered here as the antitype to that event which the Apostle had been relating, viz. *Noah and his family's being saved in the ark by water*. The business is therefore to fix the resemblance between the type and the antitype. And this is, in every particular, so natural, that no one can be at a loss to perceive it. As Noah and his family were all the happy partakers of that great temporal salvation; so are believers and their spiritual seed all the happy partakers of this great spiritual salvation by Jesus Christ. As Noah and his family were plunged in the waters of the flood; so are Christians in the waters of Baptism. And as Noah  
and

and his family were saved in water by being in the ark; so Christians are saved by Baptism, not as Baptism has any efficacy in itself to save them, but solely as it hath a reference to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, of which it is a figure, and in which they express their faith by being baptized. To this purpose the Apostle particularly observes, that *Baptism doth now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*. For the intervening words between *us* and *by* are a parenthesis, as our Translators have very properly described them. Now if this be the sense of the text, and I presume it is the natural and proper sense of it; our Author has an answer to the question he puts with an air of triumph, “with  
“ what justice can this passage be produced as  
“ alluding to the mode of baptizing by immer-  
“ sion.”

But what is the light in which Mr. *A.* views the words? He tells us “the resemblance lies  
“ between the ark and the ordinance of Bap-  
“ tism.” But the ark cannot, as I have shewn by the construction of the words, be the type of which Baptism is said to be the antitype. Nor is it true that “the Apostle *only* asserts that  
“ Baptism resembles the ark in *this* circumstance,  
“ that it saves.” For the relative *which* has a reference, not to the ark only, or to the water only, or to their being saved in the ark only, but, to  
the

the whole sentence, that is, to all these ideas united. So that Baptism is the antitype to Noah and his family's being saved in the ark by water. *The resemblance* therefore extends farther than merely to *the saving tendency of both*, that is, of the *ark* and of *baptism*. And as to the sense in which Baptism is said to *save us*, I will leave it with the impartial unbiassed Reader to determine, which account of the matter best agrees with the figurative language of the text, Mr. *A.*'s or mine. He says, "Baptism *saves us*, as a solemn token  
 " of our admission into that covenant, which  
 " engages for our preservation here, and a state  
 " of compleat and everlasting happiness here-  
 " after, through Jesus Christ." I say, it *saves us*, as by our being plunged in the water and raised up out of it, much after the same manner that Noah and his family were, we express our faith in the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our hope of eternal salvation thereby. This sense is, I think, the more proper, as there is a likeness not only between the state of one baptized and that of Noah in the ark; but also between our Baptism and the burial and resurrection of Christ, with which likewise it seems as if the Apostle designed to compare it, by saying expressly that *Baptism saves us by the resurrection of Jesus Christ* (c). Whether,

(c) Sir Norton Knatchbull, in his annotations on this passage, says, "—there was need of some significant type

ther, however, this was or was not his intention, such comparison is very clearly and strongly drawn, as we shall quickly see, in the epistle to the Romans.

And now it remains that I take some notice of the latter part of the words, *not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God*. Here the sense is so plain that one would think it could not be perverted: yet Mr. *A.* has given it such an ingenious turn, as at once to weaken the former part of the verse, by depriving it of any connexion with *the resurrection of Jesus Christ*; and at the same time totally to suppress, in the words themselves, a sentiment which he saw to be extremely

“ or figure, which might make so impenetrable a notion (he means the resurrection of Christ, whereby He was declared to be the Son of God) “ familiar and perceptible “ to the sense of men; to which purpose nothing seemed “ more fit and easy, in the wisdom of God, than the “ burying our bodies in water by baptism, from whence “ they receive an immediate resurrection. So that we may “ positively affirm, that Baptism is properly and solely a “ type of the resurrection. And to this truth do give “ their suffrage the Apostles, Fathers, Schoolmen, almost “ all interpreters ancient and modern, and even our “ English church itself, it’s judgment being manifest in “ the Rubrick of the Common-Prayer, which enjoins “ the dipping of infants in Baptism, allowing only in “ some cases the liberty of sprinkling or perfusion.” And so he goes on to produce his testimonies.



unfavourable to Pœdobaptism. Before we lay open this device of our Author's, let me explain, in a word or two, the Apostle's true meaning, if indeed it needs explanation. Having told us that *Baptism saves us*, lest that expression should be misunderstood, or we should be tempted to lay an undue stress upon the institution, he reminds us that *it is not the putting away of the filth of the flesh*, it does not save by any influence it may have to cleanse from bodily or typical defilement; but as *it is the answer of a good conscience towards God*, as it is submitted to in obedience to the divine command, and as a solemn declaration of our faith in Christ. Now, this being the obvious meaning of the words, it is natural to infer from the former clause, that immersion was probably the primitive mode of baptizing, as the filth of the flesh is much more properly and effectually put away by this kind of washing than by sprinkling (*d*): and from the latter, that infants are not the fit subjects of Baptism, as they are incapable of submitting to it in obedience to the dictates of conscience.

(*d*) Eustathius, in his notes on Homer, Odyss. v. 170. where Eurynome advises Penelope "to leave off lamenting, washing her body, and anointing her face," hath a note wherein he explains the use of such washing the body by the same words the Apostle here uses; it is, says he, ἀποθετικόν μὲν ἑστὶν—αἰτίον, a means to cleanse the body from filth.

But

But our Author, while he properly enough observes on the first part of the sentence, that the Apostle “ teaches us here that Baptism does not “ save as a mere external form of purity,” takes care to refer us in a note to the account he had given, in the third chapter, of the Jewish purifications by sprinkling; so intimating that this putting away of the filth of the flesh was by aspersions, and that therefore this phrase is not to be improved into an argument in favour of immersion: To which the short reply is, that those purifications were, as I have shewn, chiefly by bathing.—And as to the latter part of the sentence; in order to elude the objection arising from thence to the baptizing infants, he gives us this strange interpretation of it, “ that Baptism “ does not save, unless it be accompanied with “ the sanctification of the Spirit, that may enable us, with a good conscience towards God, “ to give an answer to those who ask a reason “ of the hope that is in us, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” So, you see, he ingeniously detaches the phrase, *by the resurrection of Jesus Christ*, from the former part of the verse, to which it can only with propriety belong; and makes *the answer of a good conscience towards God* to have no reference to Baptism, but only to mean that the sanctification of the Spirit (which may or may not follow Baptism) will enable a man to give a reason of his hope through the

resurrection of Jesus Christ.—But, is Mr. A. himself satisfied with this exposition of the text?—If not, how can he expect it will be satisfactory to any sincere inquirer after the truth?

3. The next passage to be considered is that in Rom. vi. 3, 4, 5. compared with a similar passage, Col. ii. 12. *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into his death?* &c. The Apostle's view in these words is to persuade the Romans to a holy life and conversation. To that end he reminds them of their Baptism, and of those great truths which that institution is adapted to express, and to which, by being baptized, they had declared their firm assent; from all which considerations he argues their personal obligations to obedience. He, first of all, appeals to the general idea they could not but have of the nature and intent of the ordinance: *Know ye not that as many as were baptized into Christ, as were thus initiated into his religion; were baptized into his death, did by Baptism profess their faith in his death, and their resolution to conform to the spiritual meaning of it.* So he goes on to a more particular description of the manner in which they were baptized, as strongly expressive of these great truths, and of the sense they must have felt of their importance. *We are buried with Him (e) by or thro'*

(e) Συνεβαφηνμεν.

(δια)

(*στ*) *Baptism, and in Baptism* (as it is in the Colossians) *into death*: as He being dead was buried, so we *in* this ordinance are buried with Him. And *like as* (*ωσπερ*) *He was raised up from the dead*, so we are raised up with Him, or (as in the Colossians) we are *in Baptism risen with Him* (*f*). And from hence he infers their obligation, *having been planted together in the likeness of his death, to be also in the likeness of his resurrection, and to walk in newness of life.*

Now surely a plain Reader would be apt to conclude from these words, that the Apostle had a reference to the manner in which Baptism was administered, and the resemblance there must have been between that institution, and the burial and resurrection of Christ. And what mode must that be, which resembles a burial and resurrection, but immersion? This idea, methinks, the passage would naturally suggest to such a person, without the aid of “a strong imagination” or a prejudiced mind:” nay “a Reader of “judgment and caution” might apprehend this, without the danger of being charged with “straining an obscure allusion (*g*).” But our Author is of another mind. “The supposition,” he tells us, “that Paul alludes here to immersion “in Baptism, as bearing a resemblance to the “burial and resurrection of Christ, is entirely

(*f*) Συμνησθησθε.

(*g*) P. 37.

“founded

“founded in a mistaken interpretation of the  
 “passage.—Baptism does not signify the humili-  
 “liation of Christ in the grave, and his rising  
 “again—it does not figure any scenes through  
 “which our Redeemer passed (b).” If Bap-  
 tism then has no reference here to the death  
 and resurrection of Christ, and bears no resem-  
 blance, in the Apostle’s intention, to those events;  
 to what does it refer? Mr. A. tells us, to “the  
 “Christian’s death unto sin, and revival to God  
 “and righteousness;” and he adds, that the  
 Apostle “represents Baptism as a type or token  
 “of that (i).” Be it so. What is the conse-  
 quence? Why, it follows from his own ac-  
 count of Baptism, as a type or token of the  
 Christian’s death to sin and revival to righteouf-  
 ness, that it is only properly administered by  
 immersion; for surely Baptism by aspersion is no  
 type or token of a person’s death and resur-  
 rection. But Mr. A. aware, as it should seem,  
 of this consequence, instantly converts the idea  
 of a death and revival into that of “a change  
 “effected by the washing of regeneration, which,”  
 adds he (strongly marking the word by giving  
 it in the original) “*He bath shed* (ἐξέχευ) *poured*  
 “*out on us* (k).”—And so he not only sets aside  
 the idea of immersion in Baptism, but substitutes  
 that of sprinkling or pouring in its room. But  
 surely our Author might have been content with

(b) P. 44, 45.

(i) P. 43.

(k) P. 45.

expunging the former idea, without obtruding upon his Reader the latter; especially in this connexion, since he had told us, a few lines before, that "the Apostle does not refer," in the passage under consideration, "to any mode of administering the ordinance." So insensibly, to say the best of it, are men betrayed into the subtilties of false reasoning, when once thro' prejudice they lose sight of the plain truth!

Indeed, Sir, I have been at a loss thoroughly to comprehend Mr. *A.*'s meaning. Sometimes I have strongly apprehended, that he does not allow Baptism to partake of the nature of a sign, figure, or representation at all; and that he means, upon that principle, to overthrow the notion of an allusion to immersion in the text. But this is so absurd an opinion, and so directly contradicted by himself, in some passages I have just quoted, that I suppose he does not chuse to avow it. Yet, his reasoning has not the least appearance of plausibility in it, unless the idea of Baptism's being a sign or figure is intirely thrown out of this passage. But since it evidently is a sign, as is also the other positive institution the Lord's Supper; by what authority does our Author set aside this idea of it here? Or how can he expect to convince a man of common understanding, that, placed as it is in this connexion with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ,

and with our death to sin, and revival to righteousness, it has no reference at all to immersion? Nor is it any objection to a resemblance between Baptism and our Saviour's death, &c. that Baptism has a still farther resemblance to our death &c. both in a natural and spiritual sense. On the contrary, this enlarged view of the institution adds a still farther beauty and propriety to that mode of administration for which we are contending.—As to Mr. *A.*'s objection to our sense of the text, as if it “made the two distinct  
 “ positive institutions of the gospel interfere with  
 “ one another (*l*);” it is so trifling that it scarce deserves an answer. What! because Baptism and the Lord's Supper have a reference to the same facts and doctrines, do they therefore so clash with each other as to disturb their order, or any way defeat their utility? With very near the same propriety he might have told us, that we should not offer thanksgiving to God in prayer, because that is the special or main business of singing. But, I ask, does not our Author himself make the two institutions interfere, when he tells us, “that Baptism is a token of the appli-  
 “ cation of Christ's blood for our justifica-  
 “ tion (*m*).”—and “a token of that redemption  
 “ which He has obtained for us by his precious  
 “ blood (*n*)? And as to the observation which follows, “that if Baptism be a memorial of

(l) P. 42.

(m) P. 52.

(n) P. 61.

“ Christ’s burial and resurrection, it should be administered after the ordinance of his Supper, which celebrates his death, and should be repeated as often as that is repeated (o);” it is of the same trifling nature with the former. If, however, it had any weight in it, it would destroy the force of the preceding objection, since it supposes the two institutions to refer to different facts, and so in no sense to interfere with each other. But, as all positive institutions and the circumstances of them must depend intirely on the will of the Legislator, it is enough for us that our Saviour has directed Baptism to be administered but once, and the Lord’s Supper to be frequently repeated. And though the former has respect to the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, as well as the latter; yet Baptism has evidently a more peculiar fitness in it to express a person’s initiation into the profession of the gospel, than the Lord’s Supper.

And now, Sir, I perswade myself enough has been said to prove, that the Apostle alludes in these passages to the ancient and scriptural mode of administering Baptism by immersion. Lest, however, it should be supposed, that prejudice, or the being accustomed to consider the words in this light, hath had any undue influence on my reasoning, you will allow me to annex the

(o) Page 42, 43.



interpretations which some eminent men have given us of the texts referred to, who yet were not in the same practice with us. I might cite many such authorities, but I shall confine myself to a few. Archbishop Tillotson says, in his sermon on 2 Tim. ii. 19. *Anciently those who were baptized put off their garments, which signified the putting off the body of sin, and were immersed and buried in the water, to represent their death to sin; and then did rise up again out of the water, to signify their entrance upon a new life. And to these customs the Apostle alludes, when he says, "How shall we, that are " dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not " that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ " &c."*—Bishop Burnet, in his Exposition of the Articles (p), says, that when any were brought to acknowledge that Jesus is the Christ, &c. then they were to baptize them, and initiate them into this religion, by obliging them to renounce all idolatry and ungodliness, as well as all secular and carnal lusts; and they led them into the water, and with no other garments but what might cover nature, they at first laid them down in the water, as a man is laid in a grave, and then they said these words, *I baptize or wash thee, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; then they raised them up again, and clean garments were put on them. From whence came the phrases of "being baptized into Christ's death, of "being buried with Him by baptism into death; of*

(p) Artic. 27. p. 300.

“our being risen with Christ,” and of “our putting on the Lord Jesus Christ; of putting off the old man,” and putting on the new.”—Dr. Whitby, in his Commentary on the New Testament, observes upon the passage before us, *It being expressly declared here, and Col. ii. 12. that we are buried with Christ in baptism,* by being buried under water; and the argument to oblige us to a conformity to his death by dying to sin, being taken hence; and this immersion being religiously observed by all Christians for thirteen centuries, and approved by our church, and the change of it into sprinkling, even without any allowance from the Author of this institution, or any licence from any council of the church, being that which the Romanist still urgeth, to justify his refusal of the cup to the laity; it were to be wished that this custom might be again of general use, and aspersion only permitted, as of old, in case of the clinici, or in present danger of death.—The Assembly of Divines, in their Annotations, thus express their sense of the words; *In this phrase, “Buried with Him in baptism,” the Apostle seemeth to allude to the ancient manner of baptism, which was to dip the parties baptized, and as it were to bury them under the water for a while, and then to draw them up out of it, and lift them up, to represent the burial of our old man, and our resurrection to newness of life.*—And Dr. Doddridge acknowledges, *It seems the part of candor to confess, that here is an allusion to the manner of baptizing by immersion, as*

most

most usual in these early times. Though, indeed, he adds, that *that will not prove this particular circumstance to be essential to the ordinance.*

4. The last passage Mr. A. mentions, as understood by some to allude to immersion, is in 1 Cor. xv. 29. *Else what shall they do which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they also baptized for the dead?* As there are various senses given of this text, which it would be tedious to collect; so the Baptists do not lay any great stress upon it in favour of their opinion. That sense, however, which our Author adopts as “most natural and proper,” instead of weakening the argument respecting immersion, seems to me rather to confirm it. He thus paraphrases the text—“If there be no resurrection, what shall they do, what a part will they appear to have acted, who in Christian Baptism, have been initiated among those that avow themselves dead to the sinful pleasures of sense in the present life, in which such indulge themselves without restraint as have no expectation of an hereafter?” Now, if in Christian Baptism we are initiated among the dead, it seems natural to expect that there should be something in the institution significative of such initiation. And what mode of administration so proper to that end, as the interment of the body in water? But, if I may be

allowed, with all deference to the judgment of others, to give my own sense of the words; I should suppose the Apostle's meaning to be this, 'To what purpose are Christians baptized (ὕδατος) in the room of the dead, laid in the baptismal sepulchre as if they were persons actually dead, and so raised up again, in token of the death and resurrection of Christ, and of their own future death and happy resurrection; to what purpose, I say, are they baptized after this manner, if there be no resurrection at all?' The words, in this view of them, furnish a striking argument to the Corinthians, in favour of this great doctrine which had been controverted among them. For so the Apostle reminds them, that they were not only taught this doctrine by his and the preaching of others, but that Baptism, a standing institution in the church, significantly expressed it; and that therefore, if there were no resurrection, this sacred rite should be laid aside. Nor does the connexion of the words with what he had been just declaring concerning the destruction of death, and the final consummation of all things, render this sense of them unnatural and improper. But whether this interpretation be the genuine one, I submit. Agreeable, however, to it a Writer (q) on the subject says, *Some*

(q) Dr. John Edwards, Enquiry into four remarkable texts, p. 143.

of the fathers hold, that the Apostle's argument in the text is of this sort: If there should be no rising of the dead hereafter, why is Baptism so significant a symbol of our dying and rising again, and also of the death and resurrection of Christ? For those that were proselytes to the Christian religion, were interpreted to make an open profession of these, in their being plunged into the baptismal water, and in being there overwhelmed and buried as it were in the consecrated element. The immersion into the water was thought to signify the death of Christ, and their coming out denoted his rising again, and did no less represent their own future resurrection.

What our Author observes at the close of this section concerning "a custom among the primitive Christians of baptizing over the sepulchres of the dead martyrs," is manifestly introduced, not with a view to elucidate the text (for he is not of their opinion who think the Apostle alludes to such a custom) but to make way for a remark favourable to the practice of sprinkling. "And it cannot," says he, "be thought that they were plunged in Baptism over those graves." But, he should have first explained and established the fact, before he had ventured to draw any inference from it. It might be a custom in primitive times (though scarce so early as in the apostolic age \*) to bap-

\* Vid. Wolfii Curas Philol. in loc.

size in church-yards: but it is evident from history and many venerable monuments of antiquity, that wherever Baptism was administered, whether in the church itself or the yard adjoining, the font or pool was of a size adapted to the purpose of immersion (r).

And now, Sir, having followed Mr. A. thro' the several allusive passages he has thought fit to consider, you will judge whether the sense the Baptists affix to them, as referring to immersion, is forced and improper, or plain and natural.

I am, Sir,

Yours.

(r) Mosheim says, "The sacrament of Baptism was administered in this (i. e. the first) century without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font." *Eccles. Hist.* Vol. I. p. 104. See also Bower's *History of the Popes*, Vol. II. p. 110. note A.

L E T.

## L E T T E R VII.

Dear SIR,

**H**itherto our Author has chiefly been upon the defensive; but it should seem from the title of this sixth chapter which we are now to consider, that he here intends to make a direct and formal assault: for he objects to our practice those *Baptisms recorded in the New Testament, that do not appear to have been administered by immersion*, but, as I suppose his meaning is, by aspersion. And indeed if Mr. A. can produce one instance from his Bible of Christian Baptism being performed by sprinkling; or, which is much the same thing, one instance wherein it is absurd to suppose it was administered by immersion, we will debate the matter no longer. But then, he must not think to put off his Readers with mere *appearances*, or what he may call probabilities, in the room of clear and substantial proof. For conjectures will not avail, in opposition to the evidence that has been adduced in favour of the fact for which I contend. And now what is his first instance? It is,

1. The Baptism of Paul. The particulars of the story, so far as they relate to the matter before us, are these: "Saul, having been converted in his way to Damascus, was led by the men that were with him to the house of one Judas in that city. There he was three days without sight, and without either eating or drinking. In that interval, Ananias, a certain disciple and a devout man, was commanded by God to go to him, and tell him what he must do. Ananias accordingly went to him in the house of Judas: and, having laid his hands on him, delivered the message he had in charge, and exhorted him not to tarry, but to arise and be baptized; he restored to him his sight. And Saul arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened." Acts ix. 1—19. compared with ch. xxii. 5—16.

Now the sum of what Mr. *A.* has to say upon the story is this—that "what passed in the house of Judas seems, the whole of it, to have been transacted in a very little time"—that "it is not probable Judas had a bath in his house, or that he should order a large tub to be brought in, and water sufficient to dip Saul there"—and that "the Apostle's weak state of health, not having eat any thing for three days, would render immersion improper \*;" for this I take to be the idea he

\* P. 47.



would inſinuate (though he has not expreſſed it) by putting that circumſtance in a parentheſis. So that, according to our Author, we have all the probabilities of time, convenience, and health againſt us. And, if there was not time enough for immerſing him, nor water enough in which to immerſe him, nor he himſelf capable of being immerſed; can you wonder, Sir, at Mr. A.'s putting this queſtion, "Where then is the proof or probability of his being baptized after this manner?" or, as I ſhould have added, of his being baptized at all? But, however theſe objections, thus confidently put, may ſtrike an inattentive Reader; they are really too trifling, if it were not for the ſake of ſuch perſons, to require an answer.

Where is the proof or probability of his being baptized by immerſion! There is both *probability* and *proof* too, Sir. As to time, ſhort as it may ſeem, there is no circumſtance in the ſtory that ſo limits it, as not to leave ſpace enough for the adminiſtration of the ordinance in this way. An hour was more than ſufficient for the needful preparations. And I know no reaſon why we may not ſuppoſe Ananias ſtaid many hours with him. As to a convenient place to baptize in, Abana and Pharpar rivers of Damafcus, which Naaman preferred to Jordan, were ſurely as commodious for a humble convert to be immerſed

mersed in, as the proud captain of the Syrian host. Or if Mr. *A.* will have it that he did not go out of the house of Judas, why should he think it scarce imaginable that Judas had a bath in his house? Need he be told that bathing was much used at that time, and that private as well as public baths were very common? What occasion then for the expedient of "ordering a tub to be brought in;" unless it be to divert his Reader, and give an air of ridicule to that which he finds it so difficult to disprove? But if we could persuade Mr. *A.* that it is not improbable that Judas might have a bath, or some other accommodation in his house for baptizing; he still insists that "the Scripture mentions no one circumstance to countenance either sup-  
 " position \*;" and therefore he cannot think the Apostle was immersed. But, if Scripture had expressly told us, that Judas had a bath in his house, and Saul was baptized in it; would our Author have believed he was plunged in it? I am inclined to think from his former reasoning he would not. 'He might have been at it, and in it, and yet not dipped in it.' And now as to the Apostle's weak state of health; Mr. *A.* has only insinuated the objection, not avowed it. I will however just observe upon it, that though his strength might be in a degree exhausted by fasting, this did not render bathing improper; nor could he apprehend any inconvenience from

it, who was juſt before miraculoſly reſtored to his ſight. Thus all our Author's improbabilities vaniſh. But as he ſtill aſks, where is the *proof* that he was immerſed? I will tell him. The ſacred Hiſtorian has aſſured us of the fact, by expreſſly declaring *he was baptized, dipped or plunged*, as I have proved the word ſignifies.

2. The next inſtances Mr. *A.* mentions of perſons "who do not appear to have been immerſed" are thoſe of Cornelius and the other Gentile converts aſſembled in his houſe. "*The Holy Ghoſt, it ſeems, falling upon them as they heard the word, Peter ſaid, Can any man forbid water, that theſe ſhould not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghoſt, as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord.*" Acts x. 44—48. Upon this ſhort ſtory Mr. *A.* obſerves, "that nothing is ſaid here that ſhould induce us to think that Cornelius had proper conveniencies in his houſe for plunging theſe converts\*," from whence he would conclude they were not plunged. But what ſtrange reaſoning is this! It is juſt as if a perſon were to inſiſt, that Paul did not adminiſter the other ordinance to the diſciples at Troas; becauſe, though it is expreſſly declared he broke bread to them, yet it does not appear from the ſtory that he had the proper conveniencies for the celebration of it, there being no mention made of their having furniſhed themſelves with wine. We ſay, and

\* P. 48.

have proved, that the word *baptize* signifies to *plunge*. Our Author admits that this is, at least, one sense of the word. Since therefore the Gentile converts are said to have been baptized, what has he to object to their having been plunged? Why, that we are *not told* of their having proper conveniencies for the purpose. Is not this frivolous to the last degree? Mr. *A.*'s business is to prove from the story, that it is absurd to suppose they were dipped, the circumstances of time, place or health not admitting of it. Till he has done this, such remarks as these will with a considerate Reader have no effect.

He farther observes, that “the plainest and most natural meaning of the expression, *Can any man forbid water that these should not be baptized?* is, Can any forbid water being brought? and not, Can any forbid that these should go to the water, or be put into it \*?” But surely if Mr. *A.* will allow himself a moment to reflect, he will see, that, as the words are an ellipsis, the sense may as grammatically, and as properly, be supplied in this latter way as the former.—And thus have we considered the whole of what is observed concerning the Baptism of Cornelius, and the Gentile converts with him. Which leads us,

3. To the case of the Jailor. The story I forbear to relate, for the sake of brevity. We have

it at large, Acts xvi. 25—40. What Mr. A. obſerves upon it, in the firſt place, is, that “ we “ have not the leaſt hint of Paul’s plunging the “ Jailor and all his houſe at midnight \*.” But if the word *baptize* ſignifies to plunge, as I have ſhewn it does; the Hiſtorian has not only given us a hint, but an expreſs aſſurance of their having been plunged. *The Jailor was baptized, he and all his, ſtraightway.* Our Author objects, however, as in the laſt inſtance, that “ not a “ word is ſaid of his having any place convenient for dipping them.” But does it thence follow that he had no place convenient for the purpoſe? Grotius is of opinion that there was a pool within the bounds of the priſon; and in that pool they might be very commodiouſly baptized: or elſe in the river near the city, mentioned in the 13th verſe. And what abſurdity, I may add, what improbability, is there in either of theſe ſuppoſitions? Nor are the Baptiſts driven to the neceſſity, as our Author would inſinuate, of “ perverting the plain meaning of the Hiſtorian’s words †,” in order to prove that the ordinance was not adminiſtered in the Jailor’s houſe. They agree with him that, when it is ſaid *the Jailor brought Paul and Silas out*, the meaning is that he brought them out of the inner priſon into which he had before thruſt them. But it does not from thence follow, that he brought them into his houſe before he was baptized. On the

\* P. 49.

† Ibid.

contrary, the order of the story clearly shews, that the Jailor and his family were baptized, after he had brought Paul and Silas out of the inner prison, and before he led them into his own house. For after he had brought them out, it is said; *he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them &c.*" So that Mr. A. is greatly mistaken when he tells us, that "it seems as evident, that the Jailor and all his were baptized there (that is, in the Jailor's own house) as that they were baptized at all\*." As to the "improbability of their being all plunged at that time of night," it is an objection that may perhaps with a cursory Reader have some effect; but when he comes to reflect on the general and frequent use of bathing in those days, and on the extraordinary revolution which had just happened in the Jailor's house, the objection will, I think, have very little weight with him. Since, however, our Author has thought fit to start this objection, he will allow me to oppose to it the improbability of taking infants out of their beds at midnight to sprinkle them. And, strange as it may seem to him, "that the Apostles, whose backs were galled with the stripes they had received but a few hours before, should in these circumstances attempt to dip the Jailor," || the fact will scarce

\* P. 50.

|| Ibid.

appear more extraordinary to a conſiderate reader than that of the Jailor's waſhing the ſtripes of the Apoſtles. If, however, theſe facts are no farther improbable than the ſuppoſition that the Jailor had a reſervoir of water in his houſe, upon which iſſue Mr. A. ſeems willing to reſt the matter; I believe moſt thoughtful perſons will be of opinion that they are not improbable at all.—And now,

4. The fourth and laſt inſtance he mentions is in Acts ii. 41. where the inſpired Writer, ſpeaking of Peter's ſermon at Jeruſalem, ſays, *Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the ſame day there were added about three thouſand ſouls.* The ſingle fact which from this text the Baptiſts are obliged to maintain is this, that upon Peter's preaching three thouſand perſons were immerſed in water. And ſurely no one will ſay that this fact is incredible. In order, however, to make it appear incredible, our Author would reduce us to a neceſſity of aſſerting, that this great multitude of people, both men and women, unprovided with ſuitable changes of apparel, were plunged in water, by the twelve Apoſtles, in one day. A very unfair representation this! And yet, abating for the circumſtance of change of raiment, even this representation does not render the fact incredible: and incredible he muſt prove it to be, ere it can have any effect to ſet  
aſide

afide the positive evidence that has been brought in favour of immersion. Let us see how the matter stands.—As to the space of time in which they were baptized, the text does not say they were baptized in one day only: I am willing however to admit that that was the fact. But it is to be remembered, that as Peter's sermon was preached at nine o'clock in the morning, there remained many hours for the administration of the ordinance.—With respect to proper conveniencies for the purpose, no place could be more commodious than Jerusalem. In the temple, the city, and private houses, there were lavers, pools, and baths, in great abundance. And tho' many of the people were at a distance from their stated abodes, 'tis scarce likely they would travel without change of raiment, whatever doubt Mr. *A.* may have upon the matter. Or if that should have happened to be the case with some of them, they might surely be very soon supplied in so populous a place as Jerusalem. So that our Author need not feel any anxiety for the decent administration of the ordinance.—And then as to the administrators, since we are not told expressly who they were, and since we know that the seventy disciples did baptize, as well as the Apostles, on other occasions; it is no unreasonable conjecture that they assisted the Apostles upon this. But, if Mr. *A.* will have it that this is *mere conjecture*, we may affirm that it



is little better than mere conjecture on his part to ſay, that the Apoſtles *alone* baptized them. All, however, that is required of us upon the preſent queſtion is, ſatisfactorily to account for the fact, that three thouſand might be immerſed, immerſed in one day, and with eaſe too. And this ſurely we have done: for no one will ſay it is a grievous taſk for eighty-two perſons to baptize each between thirty and forty in that time.

Thus, Sir, we have conſidered thoſe *other* Baptiſms recorded in the *New Teſtament*, that do not appear to our Author to have been administered by *immersion*. How the matter may appear to you and others, upon a reflection on theſe remarks, I muſt leave. And am,

Sir,

Yours.

## L E T T E R VIII.

Dear SIR,

**I**N his seventh and last chapter our Author undertakes to prove, that *sprinkling or pouring water in Christian Baptism is most agreeable to scriptural representations of the ordinance and allusions to it.* To this end he tells us, that Baptism is a token of those two grand blessings of the gospel covenant, our *Justification* through the blood of Christ, and our *Sanctification* by the Holy Spirit: and that therefore it seems to be most properly administered by sprinkling or pouring of water. He begins,

1. With our *Justification* by the blood of Christ. Of this, he says, Baptism is a *token* or figure, which, in my apprehension, seems not very well to agree with what he elsewhere says of this ordinance, that “it does not figure any scenes thro’ which our Redeemer passed (a); and, that to consider it in this light is “to make the two “distinct positive institutions of the gospel interfere with one another (b).” Nor do I well know how to reconcile what he here says of

(a) P. 45.

(b) P. 42.

Baptism's being "a token of the application of Christ's blood for our justification" (by which application he must certainly mean faith) with his not recollecting "one express command, "either of Christ or his Apostles, to baptize "believers (c)." If Baptism hath no reference to the death of Christ, and is in no sense a memorial of it, and if there is no command to baptize believers; how is Baptism a token or sign of our justification by his blood, and of the application of it to us for that purpose? But admitting that it is a *token* of our justification, though I know no passage of Scripture that so represents it; how does it from thence follow, that it is more properly administered by sprinkling than by immersion? If the New Testament is to determine which mode is the most proper, as we are there told that *Christ died for our offences, and rose again for our justification*, and that *in Baptism we are buried with Him, and rise with Him*, immersion surely does as strongly express our justification, as does aspersion. Aye but, says Mr. A. "We well know that the blood of the legal sacrifices was applied by sprinkling," and "the blood which Christ shed at the offering up of his body is called the blood of sprinkling\*." True. But by what rules of logick does it thence follow, that water in Baptism is to be applied by sprinkling? The Scriptures no where draw this

conclusion. Nor hath the phrase of *the blood of sprinkling* any the least reference to Baptism, but only to that ceremonial action under the Jewish law. Well! but “the Apostle John says, *“the blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin.”* He does so. But does he thence infer that water is to be sprinkled upon us? The truth is, he does not refer to Baptism at all: or, if Mr. *A.* will have it that he does, cleansing surely is much better effected by dipping than sprinkling. It is also true that the Apostle Peter declares *“we are elected through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus;”* but does he add that we are therefore to be baptized by sprinkling? This mode then of administering the ordinance, as an “*emblematical representation*” of our justification, hath no foundation in the word of God, however positively our Author may assert it. It may, I acknowledge, have some foundation for it in his own imagination. Baptism “*seems,*” he tells us, to be most properly thus administered as a token of our justification through the blood of Christ. Nor should I have much wondered if he had added, that it *seems* to be most properly administered, not only by *sprinkling*, but by sprinkling *blood* instead of water. For if these freedoms are to be taken with positive institutions in one particular, why not in another? Let imagination have its full scope: and then the question will be, which has the happiest invention, our Author,

or St. Peter's ſucceſſor at Rome. Mr. *A.* will however give me leave to remind him here of a ſenſible obſervation of his own—" a ſtrong  
 " imagination, or a prejudiced mind, may find  
 " an object, and then point out a reſemblance  
 " in many particulars; but no reader of judg-  
 " ment and caution will ſtrain an obſcure allu-  
 " ſion (*d*);" much leſs, I will add, fix an allu-  
 ſion where there is none at all.—We go on,

2. To our *Sanctification* by the Holy Spirit. Of this, our Author tells us, Baptiſm is a *token* or figure; and I readily agree with him it is ſo. But the queſtion is, whether ſprinkling or plunging is required in this inſtitution to expreſs our ſanctification. To give the former the ſanction of divine authority, Mr. *A.* has collected ſeveral paſſages wherein ſprinkling is mentioned in reference to purification, and the Holy Spirit, who is the great Agent in our regeneration and ſanctification, is repreſented as poured upon us. But, unhappily for him, if he could have found a hundred ſuch paſſages in his Bible, they would not have answered his purpoſe, unleſs he could have proved that theſe phraſes had a reſpect to Chriſtian Baptiſm, or, at leaſt, that it were highly probable the inſpired Writers meant to allude to it. Whether our Author was doubtful of ſucceeding, I will not pretend abſolutely to aſ-

firm; but it seems as if he were not in a very good humour by the warmth with which he here addresses the Baptists, bidding them “not dare  
 “to censure sprinkling as an improper emblem  
 “of purity;” and warning “professing Chris-  
 “tians especially to beware of such rashness,  
 “because the God and Father of our Lord Jesus  
 “Christ repeatedly makes use of the term, when  
 “promising the influences of the Spirit.” But what Baptist, Sir, is so grievously offended with the word sprinkling, as not to allow it is ever used to express purifying or cleansing? The leper might be sprinkled, and thereupon pronounced clean; and the Prophet might say in reference to that ceremony, especially at the time when it was actually in use, *I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean*: though it is to be remembered that the leper was not sprinkled with clean water, but with blood, and that the main part of his purification, as I have shewn before, consisted in washing or bathing himself in water (e). But there might, I say, be a reference to the action of sprinkling in these ceremonies for purification, and yet not even the most distant allusion to Christian Baptism. Our Author however will have it, “that the word of God  
 “expressly calls sprinkling Baptism, and speaks  
 “of persons and things as baptized that were  
 “not dipped, but sprinkled.” To prove which

(e) Lev. xiv. 8.

affection he refers us to Heb. ix. 10. where the Apostle speaks of *diverſe Baptiſms* (*ἑτεροποιοῦς Βαπτισμῶν*). But I have already ſhewn, that theſe diverſe Baptiſms reſpect the various bathings of prieſts, Levites, and people; for conſecration, deſilement, &c. in which ſenſe of the phraſe I have the concurrence of Spencer, Whitby, and other learned Pœdobaptiſts (f). Nor does it follow from the Apoſtle's ſpeaking, three or four verſes after the text, of the ſprinkling the unclean with the blood of bulls and goats, and of Moſes's ſprinkling the book and the people with blood, that therefore the idea of ſprinkling is included in the word *Baptiſms*: not to ſay that aſperſion can ſcarce with propriety be called a mode of waſhing. So that though our Author has thought fit to aſſert, “ that the word of God expreſsly  
 “ calls ſprinkling Baptiſms, and that we have  
 “ here a certain proof that ſprinkling and bap-  
 “ tizing are the ſame;” you and I, Sir, and I believe every conſiderate Reader, will be of opinion that the proof, on which he lays ſo much ſtreſs, fails. And after all, if the Apoſtle did mean by the word *Baptiſms* to expreſs the Jewiſh ſprinklings as well as bathings, it cannot ſurely be infer'd from this paſſage, in which there is no kind of *alluſion* to Chriſtian Baptiſm, that  
 “ ſprinkling or pouring of water is a ſcriptural  
 “ representation of the ordinance.”

(f) See page 37 of theſe Letters.

But to return: Mr. *A.* cites other texts from the Old Testament, such as, “*I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean—my Servant (meaning the Messiah) shall sprinkle many nations—I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, &c.—I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, &c.*” Upon which I need only observe, that if he expects his Readers will consider these passages as scriptural representations of Baptism, or even allusions to it, he must either have a very indifferent opinion of their “*judgment and caution,*” or be himself, as he had said before of others, a man of a very “*strong imagination, or a very prejudiced mind.*” But he will perhaps tell us, that his view in citing these texts was, to connect them with the words of Luke, “*who, in the Acts, describing the accomplishment of these promises, expresses himself thus, On the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” And what then? Supposing this last phrase was used by the Evangelist in reference to those promises, which yet does not appear from the story, is there any proof, I ask, or the least probable ground to apprehend, that the Historian alluded to Baptism? Unless it be said, that wherever the words sprinkling and pouring are used in Scripture, there must needs be a reference to this Christian institution. As to the other passage he quotes from Titus, where the same phrase is used of the Holy Ghost being

“*shed*”



“*shed or poured out upon us (g)* ;” if he will have it that it refers to Baptiſm, and that it is from thence very clear that “no mode is ſo proper and expreſſive as ſprinkling or pouring of water;” let me intreat him, Sir, candidly to conſider the preceding verſe, where the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the *washing of regeneration*. This he will ſcarce doubt alludes to Baptiſm alſo. Now the original word *λειτουργία*, there uſed, is derived from *λεω* (*h*), which does moſt properly, if not neceſſarily, ſignify ſuch washing as is by plunging or dipping the body in water. The Septuagint Verſion almoſt conſtantly uſes it in thoſe many paſſages in the Old Teſtament, where bathing or washing the whole body in water is commanded. Eliſha bids Naaman go and *λασαι* waſh in Jordan ſeven times: and it is afterwards ſaid he went down and dipped himſelf, *εβαπιſατο*. And, in plain conformity to this meaning of the word, the Apoſtle ſpeaks, Heb. x. 22. of the *body's being waſhed with pure water* *λελυμενοι το ſωμα υδατι καθαρω*. If therefore, in this phraſe of the washing of regeneration there is an alluſion to Baptiſm; as Baptiſm is therein deſcribed by a word which moſt properly denotes ſuch a washing as is by plunging of the whole body, it is ſcarce probable that the Apoſtle meant by *the ſhedding of the Holy Ghoſt* in the next verſe (a phraſe ſo commonly

(g) Tit. iii. 5, 6.

(h) *Λαω* lavo, & quidem proprie corpus. Hed. Lex.

used to signify the descent of the Spirit) to allude to sprinkling as the proper mode of baptizing. And this leads me to

Our Author's last argument in favour of sprinkling, which is taken from the account given us of the descent of the Holy Ghost in Acts ii. 3. *There appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and sat upon each of them.* His reasoning upon this passage, if I rightly understand him, is this: John, the Baptist, when the Pharisees and Sadducees came to his Baptism, among other things said; *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire.* In these words the Baptist fixes a resemblance between the manner in which he baptized, and the manner in which the Messiah who came after him should baptize. As the former baptized with water, so the latter should with the Holy Ghost and with fire. So far we are agreed. But the question is as to the event. For that, Mr. A. is of opinion, we are to look to the passage just cited from the Acts. Be it so. That passage however does not say, as our Author has thought fit to represent it, that "the celestial fire descended in streams upon the Apostles, and that it rested only upon their heads." All it reports is, that there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like

as of fire, and ſat upon each of them. And is there ſuch a reſemblance between the fitting of cloven tongues of fire upon the Apoſtles, and the ſprinkling or pouring water, as to oblige us, contrary to all the poſitive evidence that has been produced, to conclude that Baptiſm is moſt properly adminiſtered by aſperſion? They might be encompassed with fire, as well as have cloven tongues of fire fitting upon them. Be that however as it may, the *wind*, which is often repreſented as an emblem of the Holy Spirit, as well as fire, is ſaid to have filled all the houſe where they were ſitting, v. 2. and they are ſaid, v. 4. to be all filled with the *Holy Ghoſt*. Might they not therefore, with very near as great propriety, be deſcribed as being overwhelmed with the Holy Ghoſt and with fire, as having the Holy Ghoſt and fire ſprinkled or poured upon them (i)? But if this account of the words of John be not

(i) Some Expoſitors are of opinion, that “as John  
 “ was addreſſing himſelf to a mixed multitude of people,  
 “ conſiſting of real penitents, of ſelf-righteous Pharifees,  
 “ and of ſceptical Sadducees, he meant, by the Baptiſm  
 “ of the Holy Ghoſt and of fire, to expreſs both the waſh-  
 “ ing of regeneration through the influence of the Spirit  
 “ whom Chriſt ſhould obtain, and the deſtruction of Jeru-  
 “ ſalem by fire as the juſt puniſhment of the infidelity  
 “ and impenitence of the Jews.” And if this were his  
 meaning, no one, who reads the account which Joſephus  
 gives of that horrible cataſtrophe, can doubt a moment  
 whether it beſt agrees with the idea of immerſion or ſprink-  
 ling.

satisfactory, there is another (and which I take to be the natural and genuine sense of them) that intirely destroys this boasted argument of our Author's in favour of asperision. When our Lord says, *Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, &c.* he means, I apprehend, and I find Calvin, Grotius, &c. of the same opinion, *the water of the Spirit* or *spiritual water*, the regenerating influences of the Holy Spirit being often compared to water. Now as fire, in the language of Scripture, is used to denote the purifying influences of the Spirit as well as water; there is surely the same reason to conclude, that John means by this similar phrase of the Holy Spirit and fire, *the fire of the Spirit*, or *spiritual fire*. And if so, he who is renewed and sanctified is much more properly described as being overwhelmed with those purifying influences of divine grace, than as having them sprinkled or poured on him; the former mode perfectly agreeing with the usual manner of refining metals, the latter not at all. And I am the more confirmed in my opinion that this was the Baptist's idea, as he seems plainly to have had in his eye that remarkable prediction of the prophet Malachi, wherein his own character is first described, as *the messenger sent before the Messiah to prepare the way for Him*; and then immediately our Saviour's, as *He who should be like a refiner's fire, and like fullers soap, who should sit as a refiner*  
and

and purifier of ſilver, and ſhould purify the ſons of Levi, and purge them as gold and ſilver (i). Nor is it improbable that he alluded alſo to that other prophecy of Iſaiah, who, ſpeaking of the kingdom of the Meſſiah, ſays, that *the Lord ſhall waſh away the filth of the daughters of Zion, by the Spirit of judgment and by the Spirit of burning* (k). And now if this be the natural and genuine ſenſe of the words, what becomes of our Author's concluſion from the deſcent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecoſt, to the divine authority of ſprinkling?

Highly pleaſed, however, with his analogical reaſoning from this paſſage, Mr. A. with an air of triumph aſks us, “Why ſhould any require the plunging of the whole body in Baptiſm?” I anſwer, as I have frequently done before, becauſe Chriſt and his Apoſtles have required it. To *dip* or *plunge* is the true and proper meaning of the word, all the hiſtorical accounts of Baptiſm in ſacred Writ perfectly accord with it, and very many paſſages, that allude to it, do clearly confirm that ſenſe. But, “if that mode,” continues our Author, “were eſſential to a due adminiſtration of the ordinance, either Chriſt or his Apoſtles would certainly have inſiſted upon it.” They have ſo done; for if what was juſt aſſerted be true, whenever they ſpeak

(i) Mal. iii. 1, 2, 3.

(k) Iſa. iv. 4.

of baptizing they speak of plunging; and their uniform practice shews that this was their idea of the institution. Here I would observe, that to call immersion and sprinkling different modes of the same thing, is not only unscriptural, but absurd. It is a confusion of language to which modern custom, and that alone, has reconciled us. For how improper is it to say, that dipping and sprinkling are two modes of dipping (1)!

“They might however,” Mr. *A.* tells us, “have expressed it in terms so clear and strong, as that no honest Inquirer could have doubted of their meaning. But this,” adds he, “is very far from being the case.” Will our Author then be so good as to tell us, what two fitter words could be found, to express the bathing of the whole body, than  $\lambda\beta\omega$  and  $\beta\alpha\tau\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ ? These are the only two words, which the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament uses, to express the ceremony of immersing the whole body, as distinct from the other ceremony of sprinkling. And these the Evangelists and Apostles make use of in the New Testament, to describe this Christian institution, as if on purpose to preclude all dispute about the matter. How then could they have better provided against our mistaking their true meaning? It is not for me to affirm that an honest inquirer may not possibly

(1) See Plain Account of the Ordinance of Baptism, in a course of letters to the Bishop of Winchester.

miſtake them ; for, though I have no doubt in the world that Mr. *A.* has miſtaken them, I would be far from queſtioning his honeſty. But it is a fact too notorious to be diſputed, and which I have already by ſeveral citations ſhewn, that ſome of the moſt eminent writers among the Pædobaptiſts, eminent both for learning and piety, and whoſe integrity Mr. *A.* will not call in queſtion, have freely acknowledged that they have no doubt about the matter. It is not therefore ſo intricate an affair, as our Author would here ſeem to perſuade his Readers it is. Nor will he eaſily make thoſe believe who know the Baptiſts, that they are diſpoſed, as he would inſinuate, to arrogate to themſelves authority to decree rites and ceremonies in the Chriſtian church : a principle which, he cannot but be ſenſible, they utterly reject. Nay, I may add, he muſt be a very great ſtranger to their writings, if he does not know, that it is from an apprehenſion of the very dangerous tendency of this principle, as well as a deſire to maintain the original purity of this inſtitution, that they conſider it their duty upon all ſuch occaſions as theſe to defend the practice of immerſion.

“ Would our brethren,” he proceeds with a ſoftneſs of expreſſion ſcarce reconcilable with the ſeverity of the ſentiment, “ perſuade us  
“ there is no way to heaven but that of going

“under the water?” They would not: Mr. *A.* knows they would not. Since, however, he has thought fit to put this question, he will allow me to put another. Would our brethren persuade us that our children are out of the covenant, and their very salvation impeded by our not sprinkling them? A question which, tho’ extorted from me by our Author’s failure in point of candour, is sufficiently justified by his reasoning in the latter part of his work.—Alike uncandid is his next observation, in which he insinuates, that the Baptists look upon much water as more available to salvation than a little; and which he has descended to express in a ludicrous kind of language that will do no real service to the cause he is defending: for if custom had not reconciled the world to the modern way of baptizing, they would be apt as much to smile at the pouring water on the face of an infant, as “the plunging a grown person in the Atlantick.” But the sentiment he would convey to the disreputation of the Baptists is so totally groundless, that charity herself is at a loss to find any other excuse for him, than his feeling a suspicion that the arguments he had been using needed some farther support. No, Sir! they lay no other stress upon immersion in this ordinance, than Mr. *A.* does upon the right of the laity to the cup in the other. And a Papist may as well tell *him*, that *he* expects to merit salvation by receiving



receiving the ſacrament of the Lord's ſupper, becauſe not content with bread he muſt have wine alſo; as he tells *us*, that *we* expect to waſh away our ſins by water, becauſe, not content with a little of it ſprinkled upon our faces, we obſtinately inſiſt on having the whole body immerſed in it. We as heartily join iſſue with the Apoſtle, as Mr. *A.* in declaring, that "neither "circumciſion nor uncircumciſion," neither Baptiſm nor the ſhadow of Baptiſm, "will ſave us." Nor will any man of candour queſtion our ſincerity, while he reflects that we inſiſt on a credible profeſſion of a perſon's having become a new creature, as a prerequisite to his Baptiſm. With Peter alſo we readily agree, that "*Bap-* "tism does not ſave us by putting away the filth "of the fleſh:" though it ſeems a little extraordinary that the Apoſtle ſhould be ſuppoſed to collect this ſentiment from our Saviour's ſaying, "*He that is waſhed needeth not ſave to waſh his* "feet." As however Mr. *A.* has himſelf drawn no inference from hence in favour of ſprinkling, but only refer'd us to the opinion of a friend whom he cites in a note, I ſhall content myſelf with a remark or two on what he ſays below (*m*).

To

(*m*) The ingenious writer Mr. *A.* quotes ſuppoſes that our Saviour refers in theſe words to Chriſtian Baptiſm. I acknowledge I can ſee no ground in the ſtory for ſuch a ſuppoſition. But admitting that the words do refer to Baptiſm,

To conclude, Sir, “we refer it to every un-  
 “prejudiced and candid Inquirer after truth and  
 “duty to judge, on a serious attention to these  
 “few pages, whether our practice of baptizing  
 “by immersion be, as it is often represented,  
 “absurd and unscriptural; nay, whether it be  
 “not our duty to adhere to it, as most agree-  
 “able to what the word of God teaches con-  
 “cerning the nature and design of the ordi-  
 “nance.”

I am,

Sir, &c.

Baptism, our Author does not pretend that they are con-  
 clusive against immersion, but only against *total* immersion.  
 So that it should seem he allows the word Baptism signifies  
 immersion. And if so, how does it follow from our Lord's  
 saying that it is enough that the feet be immersed, that it  
 is enough that the face be sprinkled?

-L E T-

## L E T T E R IX.

Dear SIR,

**T** I R E D as you may be with the present debate, I must intreat your patience a little longer, while I sum up what has been said in favour of immersion. This I the rather do, as the plainness and brevity of the account I have to give of Baptism, will serve to remove a prejudice which some may have too hastily conceived against it, from the length and frequency of these controversies. For how natural is it for persons, upon a general view of the argument, to reason thus! "If the Christian dispensation is the last, the most simple, and perfect dispensation of religion; and if it enjoins only two positive institutions; and those of general and perpetual use in the church; it is, surely, scarce imaginable that the great Legislator should express Himself in so indeterminate a manner, as to give occasion for these long and tedious disquisitions, in order to come to the knowledge of his will." This, Sir, you are sensible is not the case. I would gladly however, by throwing together what has been said in a few pages, remove this

prejudice from the mind of the most superficial Reader. Nor need I, methinks, take any great pains to convince a man of plain understanding, and whose mind is free from any undue bias; that the question before us is very simple and intelligible, and that the disputes which have been agitated about it, are not owing to any ambiguity or defect in the manner of our Saviour's having communicated his will to us; but purely to the ingenuity which an unwillingness to acknowledge a mistake, and to reform an abuse, too often excites.

Our blessed Lord, just before his ascension up into heaven, solemnly commissioned his Apostles, and all succeeding ministers, to *go teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. His Apostles must have clearly understood what their Master meant by *baptizing*, and their conduct was, no doubt, conformable to the true import of the command. In a course of time, however, a question arises, whether our Saviour meant by *baptizing* the immersing persons in water, or the sprinkling or pouring water upon them, or the indifferent use of either of these modes of administering the ordinance. What should an honest Inquirer, in this case, do? He certainly could be at no loss. He would first endeavour to get the best information he could

concerning the meaning of the word *Baptize*, from its use in other passages in the New Testament, in the Septuagint Version of the Old Testament, and in the writings of Greek Authors. He would consult also the opinion of Lexicographers, Criticks, and such other learned men as are superior to the influence of prejudice. And, having so done, he would examine the several historical facts related in the New Testament concerning Baptism, and those occasional allusions to the institution which may throw any light upon it. Nor is it to be questioned but from these sources he would very easily collect the truth, however clouded by prejudice, false reasoning, and the general custom of the times.

In the first place, as to the meaning of the word. Upon considering those few passages in the New Testament, where it is used without any reference to the matter in debate; he would find, that it naturally and properly signifies *immersion*, or such washing in water as includes the idea of being dipped or plunged in it; and that the circumstances of the cases referred to in those passages, do not oblige him to understand it in any other sense. In the Septuagint it is used five-and-twenty times: in eighteen of which instances he would find it *necessarily* signifies to dip, and cannot possibly admit of any other rendering; and that as to the rest, this interpretation, tho' not

not necessary, is admissible, and in most of them very natural and proper. As to profane Authors, he would find Sophocles describing Ajax as “baptizing, or dipping, his spear in the army of the Greeks;” Polybius speaking of the Carthaginians as “baptizing, or sinking, the vessels of the Romans in the sea;” and Plutarch representing Otho as “baptized, or over head and ears in debt:” not to mention a vast many other instances of the like nature. The ablest Criticks, such as Constantine, Stephens, Vossius, Grotius, &c. would tell him that it signifies to dip, or to wash by dipping. And with them would agree the most considerable Divines of this and other countries, nay the learned among Romanists, as well as Protestants. For his farther satisfaction he would perhaps inquire, whether, if our Lord meant to enjoin aspersion as the proper mode, there were not words enough to convey that idea? To which question he would receive a ready answer in the affirmative. Whereas on the contrary, he would quickly understand, that, if our Saviour meant to confine us to immersion, He could scarce have conveyed his mind to us in any other way, unless by a periphrasis, than that He has chosen: nay that it looks as if the Evangelists and Apostles, by using the words  $\lambda\beta\omega$  and  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\omega$  in reference to the institution, had purposely designed to preclude all occasion of dispute about the matter; since

since these are the only words the Septuagint Version uses to express the ceremony of immersing the whole body, as distinct from the other ceremony of sprinkling.

Thus satisfied as to the true meaning of the words, he would go on to inquire into the historical facts recorded in the New Testament concerning Baptism. And here he would expect, if his idea of the word were just, to find persons baptized in rivers, or in such pieces of water as would admit of their being immersed therein; and to read of their going down into the water, both administrator and subject, and their coming up out of it. Accordingly the Evangelists would tell him, that John baptized the Jews *in Jordan*; and in Enon near Salim, *because there was much water there*: that our Lord, having been baptized by John, *went up straightway out of the water*: and that Philip and the Eunuch, coming to a certain water, *went down both into it*; and, when Philip had baptized the Eunuch, *they came up out of it*. Nor would it at all embarrass him to be told, that the Greek particles *ες*, *απ*, and *εκ*, do sometimes signify *to* and *from*, since, in the connexion they here stand, the sense our Translators have given them is most natural and proper: nor could indeed the sacred Historians have otherwise related the circumstances of the fact, supposing they meant

to convey the idea of immersion. So that if the like freedoms were taken with languages in other instances, as some objectors think themselves at liberty to use in the present case, the natural and obvious meaning of any writer might be easily perverted, and the plainest facts in history be rendered doubtful and precarious. Upon examining farther the other Baptisms, recorded in a summary way, in the Acts, such as those of the Jews, Paul, Cornelius, and the Philippian Jailor; he would meet with no one circumstance that should render it absurd to suppose that they were plunged in water. Thus would he find the histories of the New Testament exactly according with the sense in which he had interpreted the word of the institution.

To obtain still farther light upon the matter, and to put the question beyond all dispute, he would carefully examine all those passages in the New Testament which allude to Baptism, at the same time laying no other stress upon them than the nature of all allusive evidence will clearly warrant. Hearing our Saviour say, in the near prospect of very grievous and pungent sufferings, that He had *a Baptism to be baptized with*, he would very naturally inquire which idea would give the greatest force and energy to the sentiment He designed to convey; whether his being *overwhelmed* both body and soul in trouble,

or



or his being *sprinkled* therewith. Reading in the Epistles, that professing Christians are considered as having been *buried with Christ in Baptism*, as having *arisen with Christ*, and as having *put on Christ*; as it would strike him instantly that here are manifest allusions to the primitive manner of baptizing, so he would be apt to conclude that *that* must have been by *immersion*; since, if it were by sprinkling or pouring of water, the ideas of a burial, a resurrection, and a change of raiment, would be intirely lost. And hearing the Apostle Peter speak of the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, amidst the waters of the flood, as *typical of Baptism*, that is, of our salvation by the resurrection of Christ, so significantly expressed by this sacred rite; he would be apt to infer, that there is a much more natural reference in this passage to *immersion* than *asperision*.

Nor would he slightly pass over the words of John the Baptist to his disciples, that *as he baptized them with water, so Christ would baptize them with the Holy Ghost and fire*. But, reflecting that most probably the Baptist had that memorable prophecy of Malachi in his eye, wherein, he himself being first described, the Messiah is represented as coming after him in the character of a *Refiner*; he would be apt to conclude that John's meaning must be, "that as he plunged his disciples in water, so Christ should, agreeable to this prophecy, as a Refiner purify his disciples  
" with

“with spiritual fire, laying them therein, as the refiner does his metals in order to purge away the dross.” And however the Author to the Hebrews speaks of *diverse washings*; he would scarce from thence infer, in the face of all this positive evidence to the contrary, that Christian Baptism is to be administered as well by sprinkling as immerſion: but would naturally enough ſuppoſe (not to ſay how improper it is to ſpeak of ſprinkling as a mode of waſhing) that the diverſity there ſpoken of might refer to the various ſorts of perſons baptized, and the various purpoſes of their ſeveral Baptiſms, viz. for conſecration, purification, &c. in which ſenſe of the text he would find ſome of the moſt learned Commentators agreeing with him.—And thus, finding the difficulties in the way of his inquiries much leſs conſiderable than he might perhaps at ſetting out have expected, he would have the pleaſure of ſeeing the ſenſe, in which, with the concurrent opinion of the ableſt Critics and Divines, he had underſtood the word *Baptize*; that ſenſe, I ſay, confirmed by the plaineſt hiſtorical facts, and the moſt natural ſcriptural alluſions.

But, however ſatisfactory all this evidence might be to an honeſt inquirer; there is yet one objection which would be apt to have ſome weight with him: “If the matter be thus clear, how came ſo groſs a corruption of a plain positive

positive institution to have so generally obtained in the Christian world?" Now I acknowledge, Sir, if we could give no probable account of the origin of sprinkling or pouring water in Baptism, and if it could be proved that this practice generally prevailed in a very early age of the church; it would be pretty extraordinary, and a thoughtful person would perceive the importance of reviewing the Scripture again and again upon the matter, lest he possibly might have been mistaken in his reasonings. But even these facts would not have weight enough in them to induce him to give up the point, or to withhold his endeavours to promote a reformation; since the Bible alone is the religion of Protestants, and the nature, mode, and intent of a positive institution, are only to be collected from those authentick records of the will of Christ the great Legislator. But, in the present case, it happens quite otherwise. We can give a probable account of the origin of this corrupt practice; and can also prove that it did not generally prevail in the early ages of the church; nay that it can scarce be said, taking the whole Christian church into view, that it generally prevails even at the present time.

The source from whence this abuse originated I take to have been this. Baptism came very early to be considered as absolutely necessary to salvation. This error arose, I conjecture, from

{ a mis-

a mistaken interpretation of those words of our Saviour \*, *Except a man be born of water, and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.* The Clinici, therefore, that is, persons confined to their beds by sickness, not being in circumstances capable of receiving Baptism by immersion, rather than pass out of life without submitting to a rite of such importance, received this supposititious kind of Baptism by sprinkling or pouring of water. But, as this departure from the original mode of baptizing was only admitted in extraordinary cases, as appears by an Epistle of Cyprian to Magnus †; so it was at that time doubted, whether those who were said to be baptized this way might be accounted Christians. This is plain from the following passage in the Epistle just referred to: *You ask, my dearest son, what is my opinion respecting those who are baptized while languishing under bodily distempers, whether they are to be deemed true Christians, since they have not been washed with the salutary water, but have only had it poured upon them ‡.* So that in this passage, and many others that might be

\* John iii. 5.

† Necessitate urgente in ægritudine baptizati, &c. Cyprian. Epist. 69. ad Magnum.

‡ Quæstisti etiam, fili charissime, quid mihi de illis videatur qui in infirmitate & languore gratiam Dei consequuntur, an habendi sint legitimi Christiani, eo quod aqua salutari non loti sint, sed perfusi. Cyprian. ibid.

cited from the early Fathers of the church, it is clear that immersion was the ordinary mode of baptizing for three or four centuries after Christ. And though it might naturally be expected that aspersions, introduced in the manner you have seen, and with all the advantages of ease and indulgence to recommend it, would quickly gain ground in the world; yet it was a long while before it became so general as at the present time. Of this, Sir, without entering into a farther detail of the history of Baptism, you will be sufficiently convinced, by reflecting a moment upon two respectable authorities already refer'd to: the one a Romish Prelate, and the other a Protestant Divine of this country. The former, I mean the Bishop of Meaux, and Preceptor to the French King, says \*, *We are able to make it appear by the acts of councils, and by the ancient rituals, that for 1300 years Baptism was thus administered (that is, by immersion) throughout the whole church, as far as was possible.* And the latter, the learned Dr. Whitby †, assures us, that *immersion was religiously observed by all Christians for thirteen centuries.* In this country, you are sensible, it was practis'd till the beginning of the last century; and that it is still enjoined by the Rubrick of the Church of England, which orders the child to be DIPPED discreetly and warily.

\* Le Traite de Messire J. B. Bossuet de la communion sous les deux especes, Partie II. § 1.

† Comment. Rom. vi. 4.

And, if we extend our views to the whole Christian church, it may perhaps be affirmed that immersion prevails, even at the present time, more generally than aspersion. For Dr. John Glen King tells us, that *it is uniformly practised in the Greek church* \*; — *which church, he in another place assures us, has a greater extent of territory than the Latin, with all the branches- which are sprung from it* †.

Thus have I laid before you, my dear Sir, the sum of the argument in favour of Baptismal Immersion. And, as I am well persuaded you feel the force of it, so you will readily agree with me in wishing, that a more general attention were paid to a very sensible observation of Archbishop Tillotson ‡, and the seasonable advice he grounds upon it; with which I shall take my leave of you. *In process of time, says he, the best institutions are apt to decline, and by insensible degrees to swerve, and depart from the perfection of their first state; and therefore it is a good rule, to preserve things from corruption and degeneracy, often to look back to the first institution, and by that to correct those imperfections and errors which will almost unavoidably creep in with time.* I am, dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend, and humble Servant,

SAMUEL STENNETT.

\* King's Rites and Ceremonies of the Greek Church, p. 192. — † p. 3.

‡ Vol. II. p. 170. edit. fol.

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