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A SERMON:

SHOWING THAT

IN THE UNITY OF FAITH IS THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH;

AND THAT

BAPTISM IS NOT AN ORDINANCE, BUT A RITE;

AND THAT, BEING ONLY A RITE,

NO ONE MODE OF BAPTISM CAN PROPERLY BE MADE A TERM EITHER OF CHURCH-MEMBERSHIP OR OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP.

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BY THE REV. LOVICK PIERCE, D.D.,
OF THE SOUTH GEORGIA CONFERENCE.

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Nashville, Tenn.:
PUBLISHED BY A. H. REDFORD, AGENT, FOR THE AUTHOR.
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PREFACE.

The following discourse was first delivered before the Kentucky Annual Conference of the M. E. Church, South, in Frankfort, in September, 1868; afterward in Broadway Methodist Church, in Louisville, Ky., at the request of Dr. Linn, the pastor. Its publication being earnestly asked for, both by the Conference and the congregation, I could not well refuse. I had neither notes nor manuscript of it at that time, but judging that it was my general view and course of argument that was sought after, I have reproduced them in a somewhat enlarged form. The argument will be found in accord with the objects set forth in my general title. I have used the words, "Justified by faith alone," exegetically, not literally. I have sought to give no offense; and although I combat with opinions and cherished usage in a sister Church, I am in Christian unity with that Church in my heart.

My object is to show that no religious value can be put into any service on account of mere mode or manner, and that, consequently, immersion can be of no more religious value than sprinkling or pouring. If, therefore, any one reviews this discourse, taking exceptions, his exceptions must be to the soundness of its theology, or of its philosophy, or else his exceptions will be regarded as hypercritical by

THE AUTHOR.
SERMON.

“For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” Gal. iii. 26-29.

An analysis of this text, such as it seems both to invite and to demand, I purposely avoid, because it would break into my conception of a fair exegesis.

My first postulate is, that the unity of the faith implies and teaches the unity of the Church.

The term Church must be disabused of its popular idea, in order to a just conception of its unity. There are sects which believe absolutely that they are the Church as far as divine legitimacy goes—the “elect lady” Church. These all look to the absorption of all other Christian communities into their organization, because theirs is the Church. This is their idea of unity; but in the text, the real idea of it is found in the actual relations of the membership to God. They are the children of God, not through denominational alliance, but by faith in Christ Jesus; and the true Church—the body of Christ—is made up of God’s real children. Christ is the Head; all true believers constitute his spiritual household—his body. Hence the sin of schism. All usages, therefore, which divide true believers into legitimate and illegitimate members of Christ’s body on account of outward forms, so as to admit to, or exclude from, the communion of saints in the Lord’s-supper, entail the guilt of schism upon those who adopt and defend them.

The Church of Christ has, with great fitness, been called “the Catholic”—that is, the universal Church. The General
Epistles of the New Testament were written upon this principle, and belonged equally to every Church—everywhere. Moreover, the Church of Christ is to be considered the general Church, because, while some claim to be of Israel who are not of Israel, yet some true believers are to be found in all the evangelical organizations of the world, and the true bond of kindred affiliation is justification by faith alone. None who enter into the visible Church with a faith that merely recognizes Christ as chiefest among the saving agencies of the soul, while they willfully supplement his merit by exalting some ideal of their own into a ground of Church-fellowship and sacramental communion, can, or do, belong to the body of true believers. The work of the whole corps of ministerial and official builders, provided by divine appointment for the benefit of the Church, as detailed in the fourth chapter of Ephesians, was to find its complement in bringing the saints “in the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” The real oneness of faith was a prominent conception of St. Paul’s. One Lord, one faith, one baptism, were utterances settling at once the chief questions likely to disturb the peace of the infant Church. This the apostle did by asserting these three central ideas, or facts. For one Lord there could be but one faith, and for one Lord with one faith there could be but one baptism. This, of course, was the Christian baptism, whatever we may hereafter determine that to be, only adding now, that one baptism does not mean one mode of baptism. For the present, I confine myself to the individuality and specialty of faith.

St. Paul was set by divine commission for the defense of the gospel. The points which he did mainly defend are worthy to be noted, for these constitute the sum of the gospel. These points were, first, that the Christ he preached, was the Christ promised and prophesied of in the Scriptures of the Old Testament. Paul did not preach Christ as a bold dogmatist, but as an expounder of prophecy. Thus at Thessalonica he reasoned out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that it was foretold that Christ should suffer and die, just as the Christ he preached had done. In his Epistle to the
Hebrews, he draws out of Jewish types and symbols the gospel which they only veiled, so as to show that they were shadows of things to come, and of which Christ was the body. He therefore declares that in Christ dwelt the fullness of the Godhead bodily—that is, really, and not as the symbolic images of the tabernacle and the temple had shadowed them forth, and that he was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person. Paul knew no gospel but that in which Christ was the substance and the sum.

His second point in the defense of the gospel consisted in the explanation of the Abrahamic covenant as of perpetual force in its original gospel disclosure of the imputation of faith for righteousness. On this foundation he argued, that as a confirmed covenant could not be altered so as afterward to have more or less in it, and that the Abrahamic covenant was confirmed of God in Christ four hundred and thirty years before there was any ceremonial worship established, and that it never was a ceremonial service, but remains over, with all of its evangelical principles, promises, and blessings, to the Church so long as the Church keeps covenant with God through Christ. It was upon the promises made to Abraham and his seed—which seed was Christ—that Paul was sent as a special apostle unto the Gentiles; and his being set for the defense of the gospel, refers chiefly to the fact that his mission, both to Jews and to Gentiles, was to unfold the Abrahamic covenant in its doctrines and promises, and especially the culmination of it in the calling of the Gentiles through him. Hence the terms of the covenant and the doctrine of justification by faith are declared to be the preaching of the gospel to Abraham by the Lord himself. (See Gal. iii. 8.)

St Paul's third point in his defense of the gospel is clearly set forth in Rom. iii. 27, 28, where he teaches, that as justification is by the law of faith, and not by the law of works, therefore it is without the deeds of the law—that is, independent of any thing deriving its religious value from its legal exactness. Here let all immersionists pause and ponder Paul's special emphatic assertion of this fact: the independence of faith upon all works of religious merit. In this light, the
silly conception of God's taking any more pleasure in baptism by immersion than in baptism by affusion, if the motives of the different subjects were equally pure, is supremely absurd. The same rebuke may be administered to all High-church notions—the efficacy of sacraments after priestly consecration—the imposition of episcopal hands in an official line, on the assumption of a succession from the apostles, conveying grace, and giving validity to ministerial acts, irrespective of the inner life and character of the persons ordained—regeneration by baptism, because it is canonically administered—and all the sequences of their pretentious theory ought to stand abashed and dumb before the apostle's grand doctrine of justification by faith alone, without aid from any outward forms or legal issues. The glory of Christianity was to be recognized by the breaking down of the middle walls of partition between the members of Christ's mystical body, and all were to have access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father. If, however, the high selfish dogmas of either of those Churches are true, we are just as much under legal necessities now, in order to Church-unity and fellowship, as if some of the old ecclesiastical Jewish laws had been incorporated by divine proclamation into the Christian economy. But the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith proceeds upon the ground that grace cannot save us only through faith, and thus disposes for ever of the boastful conceits of Antinomian minds about sovereign grace. There is no sovereign grace only in reference to those whose salvation is of sovereign mercy, as in the case of infants. But where obedience is a debt, salvation must be obtained through faith working by love. In Rom. xi. 5, 6, we have this special definition of this great matter. Paul, showing that in the darkest days the Church had ever seen, God had still a remnant of believers left according to the election of grace, thus illustrates it: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be by works, then it is no more of grace, otherwise work is no more work." Herein the apostle declares that, in human salvation, the ground of it must either be in the merit of works, which would render grace useless, or else of grace,
which renders the merit of works a hopeless reliance. The combination of the two in the salvation of a fallen sinner, is an absurd conception. Nor does any thing we are commanded to do change the ground of our salvation in the least, for we are not now commanded to do any thing on the basis of law, but all we do is to be the obedience of faith—faith working by love, and without which we cannot please God. But the obligation to do a thing in the obedience of faith, cuts us off from doing any thing acceptably as a legal formality. Hence the blight and bane of every species of ritualism which teaches that the acceptableness of any service depends upon a mode prescribed by a divine law. Now, no religious duty can be safely performed under looseness of faith at this point. For example, take a full believer in immersion as a divine ordinance. He cannot receive immersion as the obedience of faith, because he embraces it in its mode as a legal requirement, and cannot escape from the baneful evil of trusting in his legal ordinance instead of the obedience of faith. Now, the obedience of faith has no attachment to the legal observance of anything; and if the mode of baptism is a legal requirement, it is not of faith by which the just shall live, because the law is not of faith, but goes upon the basis of legal compensation. I fearlessly assert that no man can be immersed, receiving baptism by immersion as an ordained mode, without resting his faith in a dangerous degree upon the merit of modal baptism; for unless its divine value is in its modal, which is its legal, merit, then every considerate immersionist must confess that immersion is of no more religious value than pouring. I repeat, that St. Paul's particularity on this point, is proof enough that he could not allow of any thing as of sufficient importance to be incorporated with faith. The simplicity of faith was its essential quality. This he farther illustrates by his repeated negations, saying, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments"—by which he doubtless means, that the keeping of the commandments is something. John says, "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments." The keeping of the com-
mandments, therefore, is of the same importance that the
love of God is, because they are only evangelically kept when
the love of God is the sole motive. Again, "For in Christ
Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircum-
cision, but faith that worketh by love." It is in Christ Jesus
that neither of the before-mentioned states is of any avail,
really conveying the idea, that unless Christ could furnish the
means of salvation without these outward auxiliaries, he could
not, as a 'divine Saviour, with them, because he must either
save by his own merit and power, or else conjointly, by an
efficacy which he had put in them by an ordinance of legal
life, and thus make himself dependent on outside formalities.
But the very moment you admit that Christ can, out of his
own fullness, make his children meet for the kingdom of
heaven, you negative all religious value in every religious act,
so far as relates to its letter. In this case, as in the other, it
is admitted that faith working by love is something, yet noth-
ing of intrinsic value so as to constitute a consideration for
pardon, but of conditional value, because it is only by faith
that the ungodly can be justified, and that faith must be
abstracted from all grounds of approval but Christ crucified;
and we must subtract from it with great exactness every idea
of God's complacency toward us on account of any outward
form.

Paul continues his negative and affirmative propositions still
farther, adding yet another phrase of the real in his affirma-
tive: "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any
thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"—that is, really
a new creation; a change in regard to which, even circum-
cision, venerable though it was, could contribute nothing, nor
the want of it in any way hinder its accomplishment. All
this, because the bestowment of every heavenly grace is shut
up to faith alone. When faith came, meaning the object of
faith—Christ himself, and the dispensation of faith as of old
ordained—then hoary-headed types and shadows fled away,
and the grand secret of the atonement—that believers were
complete in Christ—became the theme of inspired apostles.
If Christ had not been the complement of the Father's eternal
counsels, the all in all, through simple faith in him as the atoning Lamb of God, the evidence that he had to supplement his insufficiency with sacramental ordinances would have irresistibly weakened faith, because common sense itself assures us, that if there could be efficiency enough in the atoning blood of Christ to make us complete in him by simple faith, it would be most to the glory of the Godhead, and far safer for his believing people. For this reason there is no sacramental efficacy lodged anywhere in any form or ceremony. To believe on Jesus Christ as the Son of God spans every gulf, scales every mountain, and vanquishes all Satan's troops of doubt and unbelief, enables us to lay hold upon the hope set before us, and makes us feel that we are complete in him, needing no other merit save the merit of Christ's death. But a word now on this "new creation," or this being "created anew in Christ Jesus." These terms mean all they imply—that is, that spiritual regeneration, by the power of the Holy Ghost, is more than any conceivable amendment of human life by mere moral reformation. It is the actual installation of a spiritual personality; the passing away of old things, and the becoming new of all things. It is an entire change of all the affections of the heart—a substituting of the carnal appetites by those which are spiritual. The subjects of this change become spiritually-minded, and always remain so, unless they relapse into carnal indulgences. In that event, there is a reversal of the laws of this spiritual economy. Two antagonistic appetites cannot reign in a voluntary agent at the same time, and the one that does rule fixes the moral character of the agent. So God's word plainly declares. (See Rom. vi. 16.) Patent, however, as all this reasoning is, it needs the relief of careful explanation. This new creation does not make any change in the mere animal organism of humanity. All its implanted natural appetites, its social and domestic affections, remain intact in as far as they were divinely given, and require, and even demand, gratification according to the provision made for them by the Creator who ordained the laws of life. Such allowances as are thus provided for, may be indulged in perfect agreement with the spiritual-mindedness
involved in the conception of this new creature. All of it, and all that is in it, is this: that this person walks not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus having made him free from the law of sin and death, he is a new creature, because he has put off the old man, with his deeds, (a total abolition of carnal policies,) and has put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness, or, critically, the truth of holiness. I will give the following simple ideal illustration of this new-man state. Consider humanity as it is, a complex moral machine, possessed of original laws of life, which, although necessary to the objects of the Maker's will, could be run by depraved lusts so long as volition accorded, but could be just as efficiently worked by a directly opposite motive-power. Now, this new motive-power, in active, constant application, makes the new man. The carnal affections are not merely substituted by the spiritual, but they are destroyed by regenerating grace, so that the impelling power draws all its supplies from spiritual sources. The authority for this illustration may be found in Rom. vi. 13-20.

But I will return once more to Paul's negative and affirmative argument. This is the strength of his defense. On this basis he farther declares: "For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God." To make these negations divinely true, it must be remembered that the title, "Jew," is a mystical title, so that natural descent from Abraham did not constitute a sacred Jew. Indeed, this distinction was essential to the spiritual import of the Abrahamic covenant. Take this from it, and it would sink to a mere national affair. But if he who wore the name was a Jew inwardly, then was he a child of Abraham by faith. Abraham's spiritual seed alone constituted the children of the covenant. Circumcision, also, was of mystical import. Its sacred sacramental meaning was not found in its outward fleshly sign, but in the heart and spirit, drawing its praise from God, and not
from man. It is worthy of special notice, that the praise of forms is always of man, and not of God.

But the above is the translation of Paul's declaration into terms suited to Jewish conceptions. Let us put the text into terms suited to Christian conceptions. If divinely true in reference to Judaism, they are no less true in reference to Christianity. For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly, (meaning outward only,) neither is baptism that which is outward in the flesh, (only bodily.) But he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of man, but of God —of God, because it recognizes him as a Spirit, and offers to him only spiritual sacrifices and worship. Here I submit the following difficulty: No one who believes that baptism depends on the "letter" of immersion, can ever receive the baptism that is not of the letter, but of the Spirit, and his praise of it must come of men, as it is a party question, and cannot come of God, because it exalts the literal above the spiritual, and subordinates the unity of the faith to the traditions of the elders. In the text itself, we have these startling negations: that after we are made the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and have been baptized into Christ, there is no more Jew or Greek, bond or free, male or female, because we are all one by faith in Christ Jesus. These words will come in for explanation hereafter.

At this point I propose, in an argument somewhat elaborate, to give my views of the institution of Christian baptism as set forth in the text: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." That these words attach to baptism some conventional importance, all must admit. This importance, however, I shall not at present attempt to show. But as the subject of baptism, in my opinion, has been needlessly complicated with various errors, I shall try in this discussion to disabuse the public mind. My views of truth and duty will compel me to enter a caveat against some popular and long-cherished ideas.

I begin with excepting to Dr. Adam Clarke's admission, in his note on Rom. vi. 4: "Therefore we are buried with him
by baptism into death.’” Dr. C. very unwisely allows that the word buried might allude to an ancient mode of immersion. Of course ancient must apply to a time anterior to Paul’s day. As there had been no religious acts of this kind performed to which he would have referred in this connection, except those which arose under the ceremonial ablutions of the Jewish Church, I venture to say, there was not one of all these ablutions that had any kindred similitude to any thing like what the believers in immersion call immersion. It may be that the emblematic washing of proselytes, from heathenism to Judaism, might have required the washing of the whole body; but, if it did, it was a washing, not a mere wetting, and cannot lend the slightest aid in support of immersion-baptism. This idea was not in it then, and cannot be deduced from it now. Before dismissing this long misused text, I will endeavor to place it in its proper category. “Buried by baptism into death” never had any more reference to any mode of baptism, as modal, than it had to political economy, simply because modality had nothing more to do with the object of his argument than political economy. It was entirely of the instrumental end of baptism that Paul argued in this case, and of course any mode of baptism would have suited his purpose—one as well as another. It is illogical to conclude any specific mode of baptism from its instrumental use. The instrumental end of baptism, of course, determined the sacramental use of it. The end aimed at in baptism, in the apostolic use of it, was an open espousal of the whole doctrine and faith of Christ—Christ crucified for us. In this was included the necessity of his death, as well as the fact of it. Hence arose the propriety of the idea, that as many as had been baptized into Christ had put on Christ. It was a sacrament of espousal. They were identified, assimilated. In the same sense and spirit, the apostle here, speaking of the baptism of believers generally, says, “Buried with him by baptism into death,” most especially into his death, the necessity of it, the design and end of it, the assurance that our “old man” (that is, our original sin) was crucified with him, that the body of (our) sin might be destroyed. Every thing we needed, we have gained
in Christ crucified—deliverance from this body of death. Our burial is not in baptism, but it is by baptism into death—that is, really into the acceptance of Christ crucified—dead, buried, risen—because he was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification. O what a pity that the avenues of faith in the Church should have been clogged with such mummeries as immersion, a mere modality, being of divine appointment and divine delight! How much wiser and safer it would have been if, instead of the glorification of a modal idea of baptism on which God looks with complacency, just such as they feel who magnify it, all believers had been taught to believe that baptism was not a mere mode, but a religious ceremonial rite, in the use of which every true believer is understood to put on Christ, who is to be followed as our model. In this way all would have come to believe that the virtue of faith is alone in its simplicity, unmixed with other ingredients, and without distinction of objects. It is not worth while for enthusiastic immersionists to deny that they do believe in some saving virtue in immersion, as well as in Christ. This they sometimes resent, when it is alleged on our part as an objection to their views. But the fact is self-evident on their own showing. The moment they agree that there is no saving virtue in immersion, they place immersion exactly where Paul placed circumcision, when he said that in Christ Jesus it was nothing. In other relations it might be something, but in Christ Jesus it was nothing. So, also, immersion is nothing "in Christ Jesus," unless there is saving virtue in it, as immersion on which Christ himself is dependent for a perfect household of faith. If our immersion friends intend to vindicate themselves from the charge of baptismal idolatry, in the homage they pay to immersion, they must admit that Christ can have as genuine an household of faith without baptism by immersion as with it; or they are left to the dreadful alternative of supplementing the deficiency in Christ by the virtue of immersion in baptism. Unless they put the virtue in the mode, and keep it there, their whole economy concerning Church-membership, fellowship, and communion, is a vainglorious assumption. Simple
faith in Christ makes us all one, while faith compounded with immersion, as eking out the merit of Christ himself, will divide the children of God into partisan sects. A quarrel with, and a repudiation of, believers, on the ground of an outward form, is Phariseeism in sad mistake. It is due to myself, and the perplexed question of baptism, to say, I am no bigot. I only contend that there is no saving efficacy in any outward form of baptism. All of its value is in its instrumental use and end. God can be served in all that is right in principle, irrespective of form. He cannot be served in any thing that is wrong in principle or purpose, no matter how imposing the form or how plausible its defense. "Hay and stubble" may be used for building upon the foundation laid for the Church, but all such material will be burned up in the day that declares God's judgment. Let the divine goodness be praised, that such unwary souls may be saved; yet it is only "as by fire." The hay and the stubble will perish. I therefore take the ground that when our conception of religious acts is wrong, our religious faith and brotherly affection are wrong. Immersionists are all grievously wrong, because they judge others "in meats and drinks"—that is, in outward and immaterial things. Now, if they say immersion is not an immaterial thing, then they accept the alternative and say there cannot be an acceptable brotherhood in the Church of Christ without immersion, and arrogate to themselves the right of keeping the keys of the kingdom of heaven, in as far as the right to "eat his flesh and drink his blood" is concerned. But the assumption does not stop here. If they are divinely right in their practice of close communion, it follows, as a sequence, that no Church but an immersion Church has any divine right to have any sacrament. If they were to admit that we have a divine right to administer the Lord's-supper, and then refuse, on a Church-platform, to commune with us, it would place them in a terrible predicament. The two things are inseparable. The right to administer includes the right to commune. If they have a divine right to exclude us from the Lord's-supper among them, on account of immersion, it is because immersion settles all
questions on the right of sacramental rights, both within and without.

Our next field of investigation is, baptism as it is connected with John's baptism; and, among other things, to consider Christ's baptism in itself—in itself, because it was neither John's baptism nor Christian baptism. Of John's baptism, I will only say that I do not suppose any enlightened immersionist now would rest his immersion for one moment on any issue depending on John's baptism, either as to mode or as to origin, unless he should on the futile notion that Christ was baptized by John as an example to his children to follow him in going down into the water and coming up out of the water. Well do I remember when this bauble was tossed up in triumph by every advocate of immersion. But intelligent Baptists would be ashamed to defend immersion now by such dreamy dogmas as this. They know John's baptism, as John's baptism, was nullified by St. Paul, Acts xix. They know, also, from John's own confession, that he was to decrease—that is, to subside—and with his subsidence was to subside every thing which had its origin in the mission of a heraldic preacher. But if there still should be a remnant of these old Johnites unwise enough to live on this milk of religious ignorance, they are objects of pity, and not of ridicule. The intelligent advocates of immersion defend it now from what they affirm to be the only sense of one or two Greek words. Their work of defense will be duly attended to in another division. At present, I must finish my review of John's baptism. It was an intermediate baptism—neither altogether Jewish nor at all Christian. It was baptism unto repentance, summoning the subjects of it to believe on him who was to come. Let this sentence be specially heeded, for it shows, as I have intimated, that John's preaching and John's baptism were both heraldic. He came to prepare the way of the Lord, and to make his paths straight, by removing out of the way every impediment to his ministry. This was, in part, what Christ meant when, in justification of John's baptizing him, he said, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness," even the legal righteousness of
the divine order. I understand the words, "For thus it becometh us," as special, meaning that this "fulfilling of all righteousness," in our case, is emphatically between us—I must be ceremonially washed, and you must officially wash me. Wherefore John yielded to Christ's request and suffered him—that is, he yielded to it as utterly irregular, having in it no sort of relevancy to the nature and objects of John's baptism. It evidently looked to Christ's entrance upon his ministry, and especially his High-priesthood over the house of God. And as he did not minister after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchisedek, his legal consecration would of course be irregular. Its manner he chose, but its legal necessity he openly asserted. And now as to the point alluded to before, namely, the order of Christ's baptism. I deny that it was either John's baptism or the Christian baptism that Christ received, although it was legitimately called baptism. John's baptism was unto repentance, with the special injunction on all its subjects to believe on one that was to come. Both of these conditions were wholly inapplicable to Christ. The Christian baptism was designed to be the outward rite of initiation into Christ, through faith in him, and could be performed as the Christian baptism only when ceremonially done with water in the name of the Holy Trinity—all of which, as the doctrine of faith, was impossible to Christ. If, therefore, Christ did not receive John's baptism, and could not have received the Christian baptism, then the idea that he was baptized in Jordan as an example to his followers, is supremely ridiculous. But, as I intend to be candid and fair in this argument, I will here say that there has been a time in my day when this idea of example was carried so far as to believe that Christ's baptism by John was an example of present intent, even to the encouragement of sinners to submit to John's baptism unto repentance, while the truth in the divine history is that John never baptized another subject after he baptized Christ. How could he, when he had seen and believed that this illustrious personage was the Son of God? (See John i. 33, 34.) He had baptized into the faith of one to come, one of whom he was only the messenger. (See
Malachi iii. 1.) He could not, after this, call on his disciples to believe on one to come, for he had seen and believed that the promised Messiah had already come, and with this event John's dispensation ended. He had no farther commission. But the Scriptures never leave us in darkness on points material to truth. Accordingly, Luke tells us, chap. iii. 21, 22, "Now when all the people were baptized, (meaning, of course, all John baptized,) it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased." This glorious inauguration of Christ was the displacement of John, with all the functions of his dispensation. In a word, his right as a baptizer was dependent on the official relation in which he stood to Christ by divine appointment. Hence he tells us, in John i. 31, that it was for the making of Christ manifest to Israel that he came baptizing with water, which really means that the ceremonial consecration of Christ by water to the office and work of his ministry, was the legal reason and the necessary reason of his baptizing at all. See the proof: To fulfill all righteousness, even legal righteousness, in reference to a divinely-constituted ministry and priesthood, could not be set aside. The spirit of a divine order must be maintained. The priests of that valuable institution, the Jewish Church, were washed with water and anointed with pure oil, prefiguring the unction of the Holy Spirit. These were the types of the high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus. Agreeably, he was now ceremonially washed with water, according to the divine order of consecration, and anointed by the Holy Ghost. All this is made clear by John's declaration, that he that sent him had told him that on whomsoever he should see the Holy Ghost descend and abide upon him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And he saw and believed. All these things are written to show us that John's commission to baptize was to run on until the Holy Ghost should come on some one baptized by him, and abide on him as a part of him, and thus to know him as the Messiah and then to cease from his
ministry. This he most quietly did, for next day we find him proclaiming Christ as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world; and, turning over his disciples to Christ, he decreased.

My third division on the baptismal question will be the consideration of its moral signification. By baptismal, I mean any sacred ceremonial use of water appointed by God as a religious service. "The divers washings" mentioned by Mark, chap. vii., it is likely did not fall within this circle, as many of them were observed in obedience to the traditions of the elders. "The doctrine of baptisms and of laying on of hands," mentioned in Heb. vi. 2, as some of the principles of the doctrine of Christ, all of which were to be left as children leave the alphabet in their onward movement in learning, must refer to those introductory means of grace, including some measures, only represented now, by what Episcopalians call confirmation—a practice which, in my opinion, under and in a better category of religious faith and life, ought to have been preserved in all the Churches where infant baptism was retained as a divine right. There should be some imposing ceremony whereby these children might be brought into a sacred voluntary relation to the Church—not as a thing of course and of law, but as a religious induction. As to the "baptisms" alluded to in the quoted text, they were evidently of Jewish origin. And Jewish converts, like all other converts, might be disposed to take up with initiatory rites and parade these mere elementary principles of religion in place of a religious life—the very thing that all formalists do. To prevent this, and in remedy of its evil effects, every Church-member is directed under divine command to consider all these first-principle elements in a legitimate Church-membership as having done all they were retained to do, and the religious novitiate must leave them behind. It will not do for a Church-member to take along with him any of these introductory formalities as a part of his religious furniture; for if he does, he cannot go on to perfection. The condition of gaining perfection is leaving the first principles of religion, with merely introductory forms, as dead letters. This is what
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no immersionist who rests for divine acceptance on immersion can do. He cannot leave it behind or out of his fair relation to God, so long as he believes his immersion to be viewed by the Almighty as he views it himself. And the very moment he allows that God may not look upon it as he does, it becomes a mere circumstance. It is nothing.

But the point in the argument is this: if the latitude St. Paul allows himself here, as authorized by any original word from which we derive our baptism idea, justifies the plural word "baptisms," then, to my mind, it is exceedingly strange that so many wise and good men constantly affirm that "dip or immerse" is the only idea that can be legitimately derived from the original. If this be true, Paul could not have used the word baptisms in his sense of the thing; for if nothing but dip or immerse can be contained in the original, then indeed would baptism be a mode of action having no plural form, and an apostle would not have used a term so utterly senseless. The conclusion, therefore, is that there was more than one mode of using water as a religious rite which carried along with it the idea of baptism. What, then, was the moral signification of all these rites? It was moral purity, and purity is a state that is secured by purification. The water-pots filled with water at the marriage in Cana of Galilee, were after the manner of the purifying of the Jews. This allusion is evidently to some of the religious rites which they used as emblematic of moral purity, and to which I believe St. Paul alludes when he speaks of the doctrine of baptisms. The word doctrine is never used in a religious sense only when it refers to something to be believed, or to some rule of life. Now, in going on to perfection, all these outward forms of a religious life had to be discounted down to nothing. The two material agents which could be recognized as purifiers, in the figurative view of baptism, were water and fire. Hence when all men were musing whether John was the Christ or not, John answered them, saying: "I indeed baptize with water, but there cometh after me one mightier than I, he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and fire." Now, then, if what Jesus does for his disciples, "in the wash-
ing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost," is properly called baptism, (and who doubts it?) then immersion is not the divine idea of baptism, for in this affusion of the Spirit it was not even a possibility. This baptism of fire was no doubt alluded to in Malachi, 3d chap., where Christ is called the messenger of the covenant, whose coming was to inaugurate a stricter economy of spiritual discipline. John gives the same account of him in Matt. iii. 11, 12, where, in addition to his baptism of fire, he sets him forth with his fan in his hand to thoroughly purge his floor—that is, his Church. Purity by purification is everywhere kept up as the end aimed at in all Christ's offices. As a Saviour, he is like a "refiner's fire and like fullers' soap," "and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness." Thus we see that while water may cleanse or purify the flesh or clothing from accidental impurity, it requires fire to purify metals from their native dross. Hence, in John's prophetic announcement of Christ as a baptizer, he exalts him above himself and all others who baptized with water, showing that, while none of them could go any farther in baptizing than the sacramental sign of moral purity, Christ could and would effectuate moral purity itself by a baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. And let it be especially remembered that it is within both agencies, and not in either. But purity, as the idea and end of baptism, is all the time its evident teaching. The periodic culmination of this descriptive prophecy of Malachi, and its application to Christ, took place on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the waiting disciples, and sat upon their heads in the likeness of cloven tongues of fire. This was a baptism with the Holy Ghost and with fire. But this purification idea, as signified in these ceremonial baptisms, is farther alluded to by Paul in Heb. x. 22, where we are invited to come to Jesus, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Here nothing is meant but the moral purity signified by these sacred ceremonies. The thing
signified in their use constituted their whole divine value. In themselves they had none.

We come finally to consider this idea as we find it in Christ's washing the disciples' feet. This remarkable transaction has no doubt arrested the attention of every thoughtful reader. It was sudden, and without precedent. Indeed, so far as the Master's act was concerned, it was doubtless unprecedented. Hence Christ, in his inculcation of the spirit of this service on his disciples, said, "If I then, your Lord and Master; have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet, for I have given you an example that ye should do as I have done to you." Not wash each other's feet as a religious ordinance, but as I have done—that is, in the way of condescending to men of low estate. Lowliness, in the sense in which Christ exemplified it, is divine greatness. We must never be above any office of kindness which brotherly love may suggest as needful. But there is some ground to believe that this example did lead to some practice in the Apostolic Church which was reckoned as a Christian duty; otherwise the apostle would hardly have said, in his enumeration of the Christian virtues, of a widow about to be received into the class of Church-beneficiaries, "If she have washed the saints' feet." (See 1 Tim. v. 10.) It may be, however, that this washing of the saints' feet may refer to nursings in Church-infirmaries, the very places where such Christian widows would most likely be found. Be this as it may, one thing is certain, for Christ so explained himself: the washing was designed as a significant emblem of moral purity, Christ knowing what would grow out of it. After supper, without hint of his purpose, he made ready and began to wash the disciples' feet. When he came to Peter, "Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter"—alluding, no doubt, to the fearful disclosure of the treachery of Judas. Hence he made the predicate of this act impurity, in the college of disciples. In reply to Peter's modest objection, Christ said, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me"—urging the present necessity in
favor of the general issue, that none but Christ can cleanse
and keep us clean. Whereupon Peter cried out and said,
"Wash me, but not my feet alone—my hands and my head."
To this prayer of the agitated disciple, Christ replied, "He
that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean
every whit; and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who
should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean"
—alluding to them especially as a body. (See John xiii. 10,
11.) Resuming, after a practical episode, the character and
conduct of Judas Iscariot, as in verse 18th, he declared
that in this the prophetic scriptures were fulfilled, because
Judas, who had eaten bread with him even sacramentally, had
lifted up his heel against him. Much of this transaction, if
not all of it, was in the way of a significant ceremonial to
assure his disciples of his divine prescience of this fearful
defection, and that absolute uprightness in them was the ulti-
mate design of his washing their feet. The grand reason of
his officiating himself, was conveyed in his words to Peter:
"If I wash thee not, thou hast no part in me." I must do it
myself.

This feet-washing was a sign of the inward purity demanded
of them—his disciples. Spiritual cleanliness was the moral
meaning of the ceremony. Satan had entered into the heart
of Judas; his treachery had been detected and disclosed; he
stood forth identified as a traitor in the family of Christ. And
as human nature always does when its darkest secrets are
penetrated, he determined to revenge himself by the prompt
betrayal of his Master. He proceeded to consummate his fell
purpose, not by offering to turn State's-evidence, for he had
no ground to stand upon but by sale. The Jews did not pro-
pose to bribe Judas, but he went and offered to betray Christ
for thirty pieces of silver. (In a brief digression from my main
point, I beg to say, that the many scriptures in the Psalms and
in the prophets fulfilled—literally fulfilled—ought to satisfy
every man that the Scriptures came not in old time by the
will of man, but that holy men wrote them as they were moved
by the Holy Ghost.) With this unclean spirit among them,
and knowing the sore trial of faith which awaited them, Christ,
in this emblematic act of cleansing, designed to impress the necessity of personal integrity, especially the idea of spiritual purity. Judas, by indulging his inward evil emotions and appetites, had become morally defiled. To this the Master alluded in a most telling manner, when, in his final answer to Peter's refusal and to Peter's enlarged request, he said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit, and ye are clean, but not all." These words refer to the disciples as a body, and as a body they were clean, with one exception. The washing being applied to the feet, became doubly impressive, because it taught at once a lesson of spiritual cleanness and of Christian lowliness of mind. In this last sense, the Master set his disciples an example, that they should not get above one another. It was, however, an example of lowliness, not an ordinance for feet-washing. But it is as a baptismal emblem of spiritual cleanness that we are bound to consider it in the course of this argument. The Bible-word "clean" has lost its divine meaning in our familiar use of it. It is the synonym of purity—heart-purity. David prayed for the creation of a clean heart within him. He said, "The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever." And Christ said to his disciples, "Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you." When Christ said, "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit," his meaning is, that in an emblematical use of water as the sign of spiritual cleansing, the partial application of it is as significant as the total application could be. It is therefore needless to wash your hands and your head: you need nothing in this instance, and for my purpose, "save to wash your feet." The philosophy of all this is, there is no efficacy in the sign, but the value is in the thing signified. It is therefore a question even of orthodox importance, whether, in performing baptism, it is not safer to teach all the subjects of it that as baptism cannot be more than an outward sign of an inward grace, or at best a seal of the righteousness of faith which is independent of all reckoned value in outward forms, it is better to use only as much water as is indispensable to the sign. Let me illustrate my position by the following suppos-
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able case: A candidate for baptism comes to me, and I pour water into a basin, and make ready, if you please, to wash or baptize his forehead or face. But he says, "Not my face alone, but my whole body." But I, knowing my object better than he does, say to him, He that is washed, or baptized, needeth not save to wash, or baptize, his face, but is clean every whit—that is, has received all the benefit that an outward sign can impart, which is to recognize and teach an inward grace, both as to its necessity and value, and that this is obtained only "by the washing of regeneration," or being cleansed from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. But he insists his whole body must be washed, or baptized. To this I object, and say, I do not refuse to immerse you because immersion cannot be reduced to my conception of baptism, for I think it can; but I do and will object, until I am satisfied that your reason for preferring immersion is free from heresy. Why do you wish to be immersed? Are you sure that it is not the mere abundance of water that allures your faith? Allow me to ask you, if you would as soon rely on a gill of water in baptism as on an ocean of it, in as far as the water ceremonially used in baptism can be trusted in anyhow? If you would not, my dear sir, however unwittingly on your part it may be done, still it is unmistakably true that you believe there is efficacy in the mode of baptism, and I cannot indorse any theory of baptism that leans on manner for acceptance with God. That saying of Christ, "The flesh profiteth nothing," covers the whole ground. Christ cannot put essential value into an outward form, without deducting it from himself. If immersion is invested with any such importance as exclusive immersionists claim for it, then, unpleasant as the conclusion is, I can see no other reason for your insisting on immersion, only that Christ has by decree spliced himself with immersion so as to be incompetent to organize a finished Church on earth without it. This I do not believe, and I must hold your application in abeyance until you can assure me that you have no faith in your mode of baptism as mode, and that you believe God would as graciously receive you into his favor, as a believer in Christ, after baptism by pouring as
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after baptism by immersion. Take time to weigh my reasoning well. It is a great misfortune, my brother, to enter into religious relations estimating your price in the sight of God on protested paper. This applicant thinks we ask too much when we demand of him to renounce all confidence in his immersion idea as of essential worth in his Christian record. He will not say that immersion is essential to salvation, but he does say that obedience is essential; and as, in his theory, believers are commanded to be baptized, and nothing but immersion is baptism, in order to fulfill the law of obedience he must be immersed. This, then, is the logic of his faith. Christ did not make immersion, as a mode of baptism, essential to salvation, but he did make obedience to his commands essential, and therefore he commanded his believing children to be immersed by commanding them to be baptized. This is the lamest argument—the veriest dodge—ever invented by a hard-pressed reasoner. If it was the best I could do in defense of my faith, I would surrender it.

We come next to consider those passages of Scripture which, by a very rude interpretation, might seem to favor the notion of coöffect along with the Holy Spirit in the regeneration of the human soul. We notice, first, our Lord's words to Nicodemus, (John iii. 5,) "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." This text does not mean that water-baptism, whether considered as sacramental or as a divine ceremonial, has any thing to do with the being born of God. Nothing outward, as an efficient agent in the new birth, is anywhere intimated in the Bible. Those persons who quote the above text in support of baptismal regeneration, or of regeneration as coincident with baptism, confirm me in the opinion that, in relation to certain doctrinal dogmas, there is a good deal of religious lunacy—not mere obstinacy, but absolute lunacy. The more absurd the opinion, the more intensely do they cling to it. These compound texts are easily adjusted to the specified economy of grace, if left just as found. They simply set forth what is required literally in Christian life, and what is indispensable as a prere-
quisite to entering into the kingdom. Now, then, baptism is appointed—is a divine institution. Regeneration is a decree—an absolute necessity. God himself cannot get on without it, sustain moral government, and save sinners. Hence, in verses 3 and 7, Christ expressly taught the necessity of the new birth without the remotest allusion to baptism as conjoined with the Spirit in the work of regeneration. Indeed, Christ not only declares the necessity of the new birth, but explains its nature: “That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit”—or spiritual. There is no divinity in baptism, and it has neither spiritual life or power to impart; and can have none, unless God could divide his essential spiritual personage with the water, so as that neither might regenerate as a separate agent; but when acting together, might. Even this view would only minify the Spirit in order to magnify the water. Who can believe that God would deify the water of baptism, so as to make its use indispensable to regeneration? The work is his, and his glory he will not give to another, much less to a thing. The fifth verse is therefore to be regarded as a mixed declaration, in which baptism is enjoined as a duty of divine obligation, while the meetness for the kingdom of heaven is the result of spiritual regeneration.

There can be no fair exegesis of a text only, when points of doctrine and of faith, material to salvation, are left exactly as settled in God’s word. The point we make is settled thus: “But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.” He is treated by the Almighty, for Christ’s sake, as if he were righteous. Upon the authority of this text, I affirm, that if any one bring in his baptism on account of its mode, or its sacramental efficacy, as a condition of his regeneration, he is not a scriptural believer. It is through the blood of Christ alone that we have “redemption, even the forgiveness of sins.”

Next, we will consider those records which refer to the baptism of St. Paul—(Acts ix. 18, xxii. 16.) First, let me say a word to those who affirm that a certain Greek term means exactly what they want it to mean—no more, no less. Does not the
Greek word in the first text which refers to the attitude of Paul in his baptism, justify me more fully in saying, He stood up and was baptized, or even, Standing straight up, he was baptized, than their hobby-word for immersion justifies them in their interpretation? If it does, then Paul was not immersed, and if he was not immersed, immersion was not an apostolic mode of baptism. The first text is in Luke's narrative of Paul's conversion, "Arose and was baptized." The second is, perhaps, more emphatic. Ananias said unto Saul, "And now, why tarriest thou? Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord." Ananias had announced to him his divine call to the ministry, but he must not enter upon it without baptism. The Scriptures never encourage us to ignore any thing which belongs in order to the institution of the Church. Nothing can be omitted which has been ordained in the constitution of Christ's Church, without damage to the Church, and corruption to the work of faith. Paul's miraculous conversion, and his hurried entrance upon his apostolic ministry, was not marred by any irregularity. His baptism was divinely ordered. The language employed in the accont by Luke, and then by himself, indicates decidedly that he was baptized, then and there, in the very room where Ananias laid his hands upon him, and said, "Brother Saul, receive thy sight." The probabilities are all against his immersion. So also of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost, of Lydia and her household, and of the jailer and his house. But if it is allowed that any emergency could render baptism by pouring valid, then immersion is not indispensable to baptism. And if immersion, by divine decree, is indispensable, then no exigence of necessity will justify another mode. That the parties referred to were not immersed, is fairly inferable from the natural simplicity of the narrations. That they were immersed, is an improbability—an arbitrary assumption—and to affirm it, is a bold dogmatic defiance of all the laws of natural interpretation. However, it is not my object to argue for or against any mode of baptism, but to maintain that there is no saving efficacy in any mode.
If any one demurs, and quotes upon me the words, "And wash away thy sins, calling upon the name of the Lord," I will only say, they were used figuratively, as I will show from another passage of Scripture. Paul lays it down as a settled doctrine in the economy of salvation, that if works have any place, then grace has none. Salvation must, in its causative origin, be either all of works, or else all of grace. But salvation is "by grace through faith." This is a specified fact. Now, baptism belongs to works, and cannot give out grace, and cannot, either in part or in whole, wash away sins, save in a figurative sense. It is typical, and if you make it efficient, it ceases to be a figure, and becomes a saviour direct. Work becomes grace, which is absurd. I repeat, the whole religious value of the sacraments is in their signification. In this sense Christ is to be understood when he said, Except we eat his flesh and drink his blood, we have no life in us. He only meant our realization by faith in him of the thing signified in the supper. If we should rest our faith on the sacrament, we fail to discern his body. Now, in baptism, the thing signified is the washing of regeneration. If, therefore, any one should look to baptism to supply the grace it signifies, his faith is a heresy, and his religion vain.

We come next to speak of baptism as it is coupled with the salvation of Noah and his family in the ark, by water. (See 1 Peter iii. 19, 20, 21.) We have to deal only with the last verse: "The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Now, leave out the parenthetic words, which were evidently put in to prevent an erroneous construction as to the saving power of baptism, and then the text will read thus: The like figure whereunto, even baptism doth also now save us, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The salvation of Noah and his family was by water, the buoyant power of which bore up the ark, and floated it safely above the deluge. But the salvation of water-baptism is only figurative, not real, as if by water, because baptism derives its efficacy not from the water, but the resurrection of Jesus Christ. To this fact
Paul refers, as the full and final proof that Christ was God manifested in the flesh, and the confirmatory seal of the atonement. The resurrection assures our faith. Baptism has nothing to do, either by inherent or imparted virtue, in "the putting away of the filth of the flesh." Its ultimatum, in the way of achievement, is "the answer of a good conscience toward God;" and this cannot be had only in the acceptance of Christ as "the way, the truth, and the life," and the sealing of this faith by being baptized into Christ. It is evident that the importance of baptism is derived entirely from its representative design. Hence John resolved all the spiritual essence of it into the baptism of the Church with the Holy Ghost and with fire, as the end of prophecy and promise. Indeed, baptism, as a divine rite, was instituted to symbolize the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and was constituted the ceremony by which Church-members should take upon themselves all the obligations of faith—whereby we are figuratively saved by water. It has no agency in the regeneration of the soul, but is of value in the gospel order of Church-organization; so much so, that the answer of a good conscience toward God cannot be had without conforming to this order of divine appointment.

The foregoing arguments and illustrations constitute a protracted preface to the sermon preached in Frankfort and in Louisville, Ky., and at both places was requested for publication. For the work of reproduction I have no memoranda, and must rely upon the sameness of my mental perceptions. Those who heard my extemporaneous discourses will recognize this as a fair duplicate, and will see the propriety of my long exordium.

The analysis of the text is as follows: First, all of God’s children are such by faith in Christ Jesus. No other agency is recognized in this endearing relation.

Secondly, these children are all initiated into Christ’s family by baptism. Let it be noted, that their introduction into the relation of children of God was by faith in Christ Jesus, and, as the terms in the text imply, before their baptism; so that
baptism had nothing to do with the internal change, whereby they became the children of God. This was by faith alone. As with Abraham, whose faith was counted to him for righteousness, while yet in uncircumcision, so still God magnifies the righteousness of faith while we are yet unbaptized. Thus against the vagaries of baptismal regeneration, or of regeneration as coincident with immersion, as held by Campbellites, God has sought to guard the Church. But being by profession baptized into Christ, and so visibly and practically putting on Christ, is in the order of divine appointment, and must not be ignored.

Thirdly, this "putting on Christ" refers especially to all the obligations imposed on believers in their baptism. They then and there pledge themselves to the open and unreserved dedication of their whole after-life to Christ. They promise to imitate him—going about to do good in spirit, to be meek and lowly, forgiving as Christ hath forgiven them. They engage to be clothed with him, so as fully and fairly to represent him. Pastors and Churches should see to it, that no one comes into their communion unless in baptism he enters thus fully into Christ Jesus.

Fourthly, all claims to preëminence, founded on blood, or condition, or sex, as to divine rights in the way of Christian authority or brotherhood, is arrogant assumption, because in God's house, as believers, we are all one by faith in Christ Jesus, to set up any claim of divine preference, irrespective of faith or additional to it, is to make a schism in the body of Christ.

I enter now upon the long-mooted question of Christian baptism, hoping to disentangle it from the errors which have been thrown around it either by ignorance or education. One source of error, perhaps the chief one, has been the misplacement of it as to its order. It has been quoted, preached, and believed to be an "ordinance," and of course a legal necessity in some way, and, as a legal requisition, it was natural that mode should become the bone of contention. There was more of imposing show in immersion than in any other mode, and, besides, its over-zealous advocates invested it with an
attractive glory by making it an imaginary emblem of Christ's burial and resurrection. So, also, by teaching the false but winning idea of Christ's immersion in the Jordan as an example to be literally followed by all his disciples, until many of the superstitious minds, both of white and colored subjects, came up from immersion as well satisfied with their act, because of its exact filling of the fond conceit of being emblematically buried and raised up with Christ, as a fashionable woman would be with her costume after ascertaining that every plait and fold was precisely as fashion ordered it. For many long years, the most fearful apprehensions have occupied my mind concerning a certain class of our common population in reference to this mode of baptism—not because of the mode, but because of its illusions. I have been always satisfied that a people as fond of allurement and as susceptible of superstition as many of this class are, are always in danger of fatal delusion, when attracted to immersion, by having paraded before them the pretension or circumstance either of its form or its ideas. Allow me to ask the friends and ministers of immersion if they have not been inwardly premonished that many of these illiterate children of earth felt, when coming up out of the water, a spirit of self-adulation, which said, "See here, Lord; see I have followed thee in my baptism; I have done as thou hast commanded me to do"—thinking of nothing else all the time but mode. This state of mind cannot be harmless. It contains the leaven of Pharisaic righteousness. I do not enter my protest against immersion abstractly considered, but against it as a legal ordinance. But it is upon this ground alone, as I understand immersionists, that they hold, use, and preach it; yea, enforce it as a divine command. They make it a sine qua non in all the rights and relations of Church-membership and of Christian communion and fellowship. All this, not because baptism is a Christian rite not to be ignored, but because it is an absolute legal ordinance demanding immersion as the only mode for which the law of baptism can discharge its subjects as obedient to the letter. There is not an immersionist in all the land, holding these views, who
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is not a legalist, as far as baptism is concerned, as really as any elder in the Jewish Church was, when he tithed his mint and rue in honor of his law. There is no dodging the issue. If baptism is an ordinance, it is of necessity a legal mode; if a legal mode, no righteousness but legal righteousness can fill its requirements: faith has no part in it. The law is not of faith. The law inquires not what we believe, but what we do. Its economy is life, as due to legal obedience. Let immersionists remember that, if they are immersed to fulfill a legal mode, they cannot bring their baptism into the obedience of faith at all; they are all baptized upon a law-basis. Unless immersion is prescribed as a mode required by law, there is no value in the mode. But if immersion, as a mode, is demanded by law, then every subject of it is obliged to claim the benefit of legal righteousness, or count his baptism out. It cannot claim under grace, and yet rule as law.

Out of the aforesaid misconception have arisen all the complaints urged against the translators of our present authorized version. To remedy their supposed errors, a large and respectable body among Protestant Christians have committed what I regard the greatest blunder of their sect—the change of the authorized version into a denominational version. Say what they may, the verdict of all considerate minds is that the new version is a sectarian Bible. The old version did not teach immersion as an absolute requirement, but simply to baptize in the name of the Lord Jesus, while they, single-handed, against all Protestant Christendom, affirmed that baptism meant immersion, and that therefore there was no baptism without immersion. Assuming that the translators were dishonest and sought to suppress the truth, they determined to make the Bible teach immersion in terms, by translating into English the Greek word which King James's translators only transferred, or, if it is preferred, anglicized. The translators were right, because as a ritual term it could not be translated without losing its ritual sense, which was its only original idea. There was no term into which it could have been translated without changing it into a legal ordinance, the very idea which the genius of the gospel
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was laboring to eliminate. It must have been rendered either sprinkle, or pour, or immerse, either of which, if understood as a prescribed mode divinely appointed because divinely preferred, would involve the very same difficulty, namely, attaching religious value to mere mode. This is utterly impossible with God, just as much so as giving value to the place where devotion is performed without regard to the animus or spirit of the worshiper. Mode, as mode in baptism, must be a matter of as perfect indifference with God as would have been the question whether the worshiper was in Jerusalem or Samaria, when worshiping God as a Spirit, in spirit and truth. Alas for the Churches which look for divine acceptance on the vain conceit of God’s love of forms, as forms! It is true in all cases, that the letter kills while the spirit alone gives life. If baptism were shut up to actual modality, in any one of the three modes of administering it, in spite of all warning, the ordained mode would become the ideal of acceptable service. Indeed, the idea of God’s estimating mode in baptism high enough to secure it by an ordinance, would excuse the most extravagant devotion to it. And this would be a provision for spiritual idolatry.

I take the ground openly that baptism is not an ordinance, but a rite, and that it cannot be both. If it is an ordinance, it is not a rite; if it is a rite, it is not an ordinance. The two things cannot be the same thing. An ordinance is a rule of action, authoritatively prescribed. A rite is a religious service, ceremonially performed. Baptism, in every common-sense view of it, partakes only of this quality. How unmeaning it would all be if, when a convert is about to be baptized, we lose sight of its gracious signification in the barren conceit of a legal exaction! But let baptism be confined to a law of definite modality, and this issue is inevitable. I am not piling up arguments against immersion. Sprinkling water with hyssop, or pouring it out of a silver cup, if done as immersion is claimed to be done, in answer to a specific law of mode, would be as utterly graceless and as entirely legal in one way as in the other. I am contending against all modes as containing any religious value on account of form, and if
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an immersionist will grant this point, his preference of immersion will be extinguished.

False premises always lead to false and unfair conclusions. So in this case: immersionists, starting from a wrong standpoint, have very naturally run into wrong views concerning Christian communion. They assume, on the ground of their faith in immersion as a divine ordinance, that this mode of baptism can alone legitimize Church-membership. In a word, they believe there is no regular Gospel Church but their own; hence they maintain close communion. Let me kindly inquire of these brethren whether they do really believe what they practically assert, namely, that Christ does not and cannot have upon the earth a people scripturally worthy to "eat his flesh and drink his blood" sacramentally, unless they receive their fitness through immersion? If so, do they not perceive that in this ordinance Christ has so disabled himself as to make him dependent on this contingency for a sacramental membership in his mystical body? And does not such a conclusion startle men and angels? But if immersionists admit that Christ can have children by faith in him worthy to partake of his body and blood, without immersion, then immersion, as a mode, is null and void. Baptism, as a simple Christian ritual, remains intact. My readers must not forget my position, that baptism is not an ordinance set to guard a mode, but is a divine rite, by which we attest our faith in Christ—a religious service ceremonially performed with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. I prefer sprinkling or pouring; but any mode, rightly performed and rightly received, meets the design and fulfills the end of the rite. Here let me say, I seriously doubt whether any one, resolving baptism into a legal mode, can be consistently baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity. If baptism is received upon a law-basis at all, it can only claim upon the ground of legal obedience; for the law is not of faith. Baptism, as a simple Christian ritual alone, can be done in the names of the ever-glorious Godhead. It is herein and hereby that as many believers as are baptized, are baptized into Christ and put on Christ.
The defenders of this venerable dogma—ordained immersion—surely never thought how nearly they approach the maelstrom of justification by baptism, and that defection from Christ into which the Galatian Church was falling by an over-appreciation of circumcision. Thus, revolting from the economy of justification by faith alone, they unwittingly look for justification by works, and, as a sequence, must fall from grace. To one of my esteemed brethren, a Baptist minister of high grade, an inquirer said, "Do you believe baptism essential to salvation?" He answered, "No; but obedience is, and we are commanded to be baptized"—that is, immersed, as he held immersion alone to be baptism. Now see his reasoning, stripped of its specious drapery: immersion is not essential to salvation, but obedience is, and the law of obedience cannot be fulfilled without being immersed. But for the grace of charity, I would pronounce this answer disingenuous. Yet he was a good man, and his difficulty was that, after all he had said about the divine ordinance of baptism, and its divine rank in the line of Christian service, it was the best he could do, without openly maintaining a downright heresy. It is a safe maxim that "what is overdone is undone." Such is the result in this case. So much is said of and about immersion as to involve the question of salvation itself. To declare immersion essential to salvation, is rather more than immersionists can venture; but to admit that God can get along in his economy of salvation, so utterly independent of it as to put it where faith in Christ puts circumcision, among the negations, and count it as "nothing," is what no enthusiastic immersionist will allow. If any one doubts this, let him test it. Herein lies the startling error of Alexander Campbell, the apostle of the Campbellite Baptists. The overestimated value of immersion overspread the whole Baptist Church. They claimed for it a divine affection, and unwisely gave it a rank in the Church which brought it right up alongside of Campbell's exaggerated idea. I am fully persuaded that the Campbellite error would never have been born if it had not been for the overestimated importance of immersion; and this importance would never have been dreamed of, if it had
not been for the false conception that baptism was a modal ordinance instead of a simple Christian rite. It is impossible to shut up the Deity to any specified mannerism, in the performance of an outward religious act, without resolving religion into the zealous observance of that mannerism. In nothing has this truth been more fully verified than in immersion. Proofs multiply all the time, satisfactory to my mind, that Baptist preachers themselves are not aware how much they rely upon immersion as a ground of high recommendation to the preference of God for them and their people on this account. Else, why such language as this: "I love you as a Christian brother, and it would do me so much good to lead you down into the water and baptize you!" If God can convert and sprinkle me from an evil conscience without immersion, why be troubled about me? But if he cannot, then declare immersion essential to salvation, and be done with all equivocal answers.

My object in this discourse is fairness and truth. I must, therefore, say that the regular Baptists, as far as I know, never did believe either in baptismal regeneration or regeneration as the coincidence or sequence of baptism. It is, however, needful to notice how exactly alike the causative agencies in these errors are. The notion of baptismal regeneration grew out of the mythical idea of apostolic succession. The apostles, being the appointees of Christ and immediate graduates of the Pentecostal commencement, wrought miracles in Christ's name, and were honored, during this momentous period of Church-history, with being the medium of conveying the Holy Ghost by imposition of hands—thus visibly setting forth the fact that the Church was to be established and transmitted by authority of a divine commission, and not by a canon of episcopal lineage. All worth supposed to be derived from "succession" is mere arrogance. Nothing that belongs to or can enter into the essential living elements of an apostolic ministry could, by any possibility, have been committed to the issue of an uninterrupted line of transmission by imposition of hands from Peter or Paul down to us. If there cannot be as regular and as divine a ministry raised
up without this as by it and through it, then has the great 
Head of the Church deemed it safer to intrust the perpetua-
tion of his ministry to the chances of apostolic succession 
than to hold the authority in his own hands; it being certain 
that he did establish the safest way, this alone being worthy 
of his wisdom and goodness. If, however, this dogma of 
High-churchism is true, then Christ, knowing the Church and 
her ministry would be safer in these prelatical hands than in 
his own, did divest himself of the authority to perpetuate 
them, in order to invest these successors with the right and 
power. If Christ did so invest them, then their Church is 
"the Church," and if not, not.

This fond dream of "succession" very naturally gave birth 
to another fancy no less unreal and delusive—the doctrine of 
priestly efficacy. The idea is, that the Holy Ghost is conveyed 
through this line by material contact in episcopal ordination, 
and in the sacraments by priestly consecration. Hence the 
vain conceit of baptismal regeneration. They could not con-
ceive of any regeneration following my baptismal service, nor 
doubt it in any one of their own priests—even though he 
might have spent the night before in sensuality—because, as 
he was in the line, his efficacious touch must insure the work.

The likeness between these High-churchmen and exclusive 
immersionists lies in this, that both vaunt the principle of 
successional prestige. The latter derive the antiquity and the 
sacred value of immersion from John the Baptist, by assuming 
that Christ sanctified it in his personal baptism, perpetuated it in 
his baptismal commission, and carried it out in the hands of his 
apostles. That they believe as absolutely in the virtue of suc-
cessional merit in their way as Episcopalians do in theirs, is 
evident from the fact that they do not believe any one can be 
immersed into the Church according to the will of God unless 
he is immersed by a regular Baptist minister. We Method-
ists immerse a good many, but they are excluded from a Bapt-
stist communion as rigidly as the rest of us. This proves that 
they do not believe in immersion simply because it is immers-
sion, but must superadd this successional integrity. The line 
from its origin must be continuous in the hands of its only
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legitimate trustees. Lineage is something as well as mode; if not, my Baptist brethren would argue that immersion at my hands would be as divinely valid as at their own. Thus we see how exactly alike these dogmatisms are.

All excess of value levied on outward forms of religion leads to the loss of its spiritual unity and of Christian fellowship. The worst feature after all, perhaps, is the fact, that this assumed preference of God for them over other forms of worship, if it does not actually invest them with meritorious worth, certainly gathers about them such a halo of interest as to beguile unwary souls, and betray them into fatal heresy. It will be seen, in a few years, that ritualistic fanatics will all land in Romanism as their genial home, and stark-naked ritualism will be the bond of their religious fraternity. It was under the attraction of this social element, aggregating all who were like-minded, which banded the Campbellites into an independent association of Baptists. Their views of immersion took on a form and style of appreciation which startled the original immersionists, and led to the necessity of organizing a new immersion sect—both sects clinging to the idea of a divine preference of immersion, and believing in common that no Gospel Church could be created without immersion as an ordinance of modal baptism—esteeming obedience essential to salvation, and immersion demanded by obedience. This view of baptism has made it no marvel to me that a man as enthusiastic in his temperament, and as visionary in his zeal, as Mr. Campbell evidently was, should have fallen into his unfortunate heresy. What was his theory? Was it not this?—that there was no outward separate Spirit working regeneration in us by spiritual power or influence, independent of all outward agencies, but that the Spirit was contained in the letter, and that his efficiency in saving us turned upon our obedience to the letter of God's word, affirming, at the same time, that we are commanded to be baptized as the initial step in religion, (which is to be understood always as only a command to be immersed,) and as a sequence of immersion, when all is obediently submitted to, regeneration takes place—not as the effect of spiritual agency, but as an accompani-
ment of baptism, which is immersion—the Spirit lying dormant in the letter, like the germ of life in a grain of corn, until it is evoked from its inactive state by outward appliances. But let it be always kept before the mind that the Spirit never responds with this rich reward only in immersion, and that therefore its response is the evidence of God’s high regard for immersion, for the ground of this approval is the merit of mode on its own account. I defy any man to justify Mr. Campbell’s scheme.

There is no sense in which baptism can minister any aid in the act of regeneration, unless it be by the merit of works. The doctrine is, therefore, the doctrine of meritorious work. There is no conceivable way in which submission to the command to be baptized can facilitate regeneration, except on the ground of legal obedience, and on this because of the merit of such obedience. There is no pardon, no regeneration, of sinful souls on account of merited mercy. The scriptures of the New Testament have been special and definite in their denial of merit to works, stating, in most express terms, that salvation is by grace through faith, and not at all of works. If the Campbellites believe at all that we are justified by faith, their faith must be in the merit of baptism as a deed of religious service, else their justification cannot be by faith at all, for faith must rest on the ground of merit. But the claim of true faith rests upon merit outside of any personal deeds. While merited mercy rests upon equitable deserts, I can hardly believe that they would assume that the merit of immersion is so great as to substitute the merit of Christ by its sufficiency. If it is not sufficient of itself, it cannot even supplement it. Either it is sufficient to carry the cause on its own account, or it is insufficient to carry on part of it; and the teachers of its sufficiency are false teachers, and the converts to it are deluded heretics.

St. Paul says that in Christ dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and that believers are complete in him—the possession of Christ is the complement of religion. This cannot be true if any thing, besides simple faith in him is a divine necessity. Now, if immersion is a condition of regeneration
or of Christian unity, then we are not complete in him on his own account, but by reason of an outward observance made indispensable by his own ordination. Whatever is made indispensable to completeness in Christ, by his ordination of it to that end, must be as much an object of faith as he is himself. Admit this as true, and then it is not true that believers are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law—because the scheme itself makes a deed of the law necessary to our justification. In this dilemma all exclusive immersionists are involved. Among the regular Baptists it is an embarrassing error, leading them to do things from which their Christian sympathies revolt. This sympathy itself is proof that the simple law of brotherly love is improperly violated. Among the Campbellites it is a specious heresy, prompting them to pledge regeneration to sinners, in whom there is neither a broken heart nor a contrite spirit as manifest signs of evangelical repentance, if they will submit to immersion as its unfailing condition.

This error is the more glaring in its folly, from the fact that no one ever operates regeneration with the sacrament of the Lord's-supper. It seems to me, if regeneration could have been made the sequence of either, this sacrament ought to have had the preference, because it is the communion of the body and blood of Jesus, and more is said of its sacred importance than of the importance of baptism. This fact bears equally hard upon both divisions of the Baptists, as they both hold that immersion alone is baptism. And it is not to baptism as a sacrament—the sealing rite of faith in Christ—that either party clings with such pertinacious obstinacy, but to immersion as an ordained mode—showing that their faith is not in it, as a gospel ritual, but as a modal ordinance, in which God himself stickles for mode as an exaction of formal obedience, and will accept of nothing else. Consequently every enthusiastic immersionist is compelled, either directly or indirectly, to glorify his literal obedience. Herein is enveloped the virus of Pharisaic separateness. This idea of divine complacency in outward excellences is not a mere infirmity, but a Pharisaical conceit of a better showing than other professors
of religion. This fancy is characteristic of all people who become insane about any outward form of religious service which is held on to as of divine origin and order, or as distinctive of denominational glory. In this the Baptists, in my opinion, have been very unfortunate. The denominational title seems as if chosen to declare themselves the only baptizers, (while all others are mere pretenders,) and the keepers and defenders of baptism after the Lord's ideal of it. I have long been sorry at my heart on account of the idolatrous homage paid to a form—a mere idea—by my Baptist brethren. I never hear them speak of the number of converts at any of their revivals, but only of the number baptized—thus furnishing *prima facie* evidence that baptism held too high a rank in the scale of their reckoning. Close communion is another proof of this evil. In all their intercourse, the enlightened and liberal-minded among them are as cordial in their brotherly spirit as any other Christian people. But when it comes to eating and drinking sacramentally at the Lord's table, believers who have not been immersed are ruled off with as much stiffness as any other class of non-professing men. All this is the worship of their mode of baptism. This is so sacred, in its relation to Church-existence, as to demand for Christ's sake the excommunication of all invaders of the true tabernacle—which is now the Baptist Church—because immersion is the only door of entrance into Christ's Church, and they are its only guard. All others, if they recognize immersion at all, *commonize* it. We reverence it as an altar of most special sacrifice, where God smells the sweetest odor of Christian incense. It is the Holy of holies in our Church; for while we require a good general Christian character as requisite to Christian communion, yet we make immersion, at the hands of an orderly Baptist minister, the wedding-garment at our sacramental feast. No one can be recognized by us as a legitimate Church-member but an orderly Baptist. There is no door of lawful entrance into Christ's Church but immersion, which cannot be divinely administered except by a regular Baptist minister. At this point I hear some kind-hearted Baptist cry out and say, "Hold on, my dear old brother; you over-
charge us! My heart is larger than this limit.” This I do not deny, or doubt, when your hearts are natural. Your heart is better than your creed. But you are in an iron cage as a Baptist, and until you burst its rigid ribs by the overflowings of a Christian charity too strong for these iron-clad notions, you must fight off your Christian sympathies as at war with the sacramental efficacy of immersion. We all baptize with water in the name of the triune God. But you say ours is no baptism—immersion alone is baptism. Now, if this be so, do you not see that all the virtue that is in baptism is ascribed to its mode, and that Christ, by this arrangement, has made his spiritual household depend upon an outward act? Surely this cannot be so. If it is, then Christ himself is dependent on immersion for a Christian Church. Will any one say, right out, that immersion is indispensable to a divine fitness for the Lord’s-supper? Yet every Baptist Church, by the rule of close communion, does say this very thing. Suppose Christ had made immersion, by positive law, a prerequisite to Christian communion, would he not thereby have invested immersion with a grace-communicating power, or else made the right to commune depend on an act of legal obedience? Certainly. Yet what he did not—indeed, could not—do, his mistaken friends have done for him. The odium of this ungracious, ugly-looking act, our Baptist brethren have entailed upon themselves, by setting themselves apart for the defense of a dogmatic notion. There are thousands of them at this day who feel the pinching of this old shoe upon their feet—now “shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.” But they cannot open the door of their Church as wide as the affections of their hearts without admitting that immersion is nothing but immersion, and that the only indispensable requisite for Christian communion in the Church below, or in heaven above, is “a new creation,” which no sensible Christian will say is suspended on being immersed in baptism.

There is no cure for this hateful bigotry but in adopting the following principles of Christian philosophy: First, not to make any thing a term of communion that is not also a term of salvation. Second, to acknowledge that whosoever is good
enough for Christ, is also good enough for Christ's Church. Let my Baptist brethren do this, and another close-communion service will never blot their Christian fame. I am happy to see that the English Baptists are wiping out this stain from their honorable record—with such men as Spurgeon in the front rank of these noble reformers. Away with all schismatic bigotry growing out of spiritless formalities! To cherish them, is like the incubation of a serpent's egg. If any thing is hatched, it will be of the serpentine breed. Let the egg be crushed.

I repeat here, it is not surprising that Mr. Campbell should have added to the already extravagant views of immersion, the still greater one of regeneration as an accompanying grace. An outward rite, invested with such divine value as to be a term of communion at the Lord's table, could be easily run out into a term of salvation. This was all Mr. Campbell did, but was enough to change an error into mischievous heterodoxy. The erroneous appreciation of immersion common to all Baptists, was raised by him and his deluded followers to the rank of an ordained medium of regeneration. With its old devotees, it did not amount necessarily to more than "the hay and stubble" which is worked into the building of a church by enthusiastic worshipers of outward forms, even when the building is professedly upon a solid foundation. These improper materials may be burned out, and such unfortunate souls be saved, yet so as by fire. But in the hands of its new friends—the Reformers, as they love to call themselves—it is more than hay and stubble: it is a fatal heresy, just as sure as it is a false doctrine; and it is a false doctrine, just as sure as our justification is by faith in Christ Jesus. I should like to know exactly how the "Reformers" work their way out of this difficulty. I see how they are entrapped, but do not see how they can escape. Perhaps in here is the reason why they use the word regeneration rather than the word justification. It is nowhere said we are regenerated by faith alone; but it is said in terms and in sense everywhere, when this was the theme, that we are justified by faith; and that we might not fall into the fatal error of ritualistic efficacy, it is said substan-
tially, and signified often, that we are “justified by faith alone;” and to make us understand what “by faith alone” means, it is added, “without the deeds of the law.” Now, then, even admitting immersion to be required by absolute law—which I deny, but suppose it to be so—how can a Campbellite believer have the infidel hardihood to associate regeneration with his immersion? In so doing, does he not—must he not—bring in the deeds of the law? He complies, in his baptism, with a legal deed, and ascribes his regeneration to the efficacy of his baptism in some way, so that it comes in as a great favor, issuing from a provisional government. But if this be so at all in any way, to any extent, so that baptism counts among the reasons God regards in a sinner’s regeneration, then it is for ever false that we are justified by faith alone without the deeds of the law. St. Paul says the Church was once kept under the law—the law of sacrifices and symbols, shut up in them until faith came—that is, till Christ came—after which we were to be no longer under law in any of its former uses. We were all in this special sense to become the children of Abraham, having our faith counted to us for righteousness, as free from any saving virtue in baptism as his was from any in circumcision, he being at the time in uncircumcision. To this divine economy the Campbellite idea of religion is in fearful antagonism. I care not how they may seek to escape from the dilemma, with their views of regeneration, they must eliminate what Paul teaches as faith in religion, or else confess that their faith is directly in baptism as containing in it by divine arrangement the grace of spiritual regeneration. Baptism must regenerate by its own merit as an ordained agent, or else it has no part in the work. The dictum of the Bible has settled this, as a fact no longer debatable, that human salvation is either all of works, or else all of grace. A condition that could not be provided for except by the meritorious death of God’s only begotten Son, sent to be a propitiation for our sins, can never admit into the reason of our finding acceptance at the throne of grace any value derived from outward forms. The moment God should admit such a reason for reconciliation into the scheme
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of salvation, he would frustrate his own grace. For it is confessedly true, that if righteousness come by the law, or even if it could have come by the law, Christ died in vain. The necessity of Christ's death in order to reconciliation with God, settles the question for ever, that faith in Christ—faith alone in Christ—is the only possible way in which a sinner can find the grace of regeneration. "That which is born of the Spirit, is Spirit"—is spiritual—wholly spiritual. But if baptism has any part in regeneration, it is not Spirit—it is not wholly spiritual. Baptism cannot, by any possibility, be incorporated into what our Saviour meant by Spirit, when he so significantly used the words quoted in connection with the new birth, as preached to Nicodemus. Baptismal regeneration is utterly irreconcilable with the Scripture doctrine of a new creation. New creatures in Christ Jesus are not made by immersion in water, nor by the laying on of the hands of a so-called priesthood, boasting of apostolic virtue conveyed along a line of successional descent. These canonical gentlemen will do well to remember, that, judging them by their own pretentious claims, if they are not in an unbroken line of succession from the apostles, they are nowhere. I will risk my judgment, that there is not a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church that would sue for an estate where the evidence on which his recovery of it depended was as uncertain and presumptuous in itself as is the evidence of an uninterrupted line of prelates from Paul or Peter down to him. But what could not, under the rules of evidence, get before an enlightened court, is pompously claimed as certain, and on this vain-glorious pretense they contrive to keep their doctrine of sacramental efficacy in countenance. Akin to this delusive folly is Mr. Campbell's dream, that the mighty change effected by the Spirit of God, and described as a new creation, actually transpires while passing through immersion. Whatever the original friends of immersion may deny, these "Reformers" must acknowledge one of two alternatives: Either the Holy Ghost can, and does, regenerate souls apart from baptism, thus demonstrating that baptism has nothing to do with it, or that regeneration in the order of God takes place always, and only
in connection, with legitimate immersion—I say legitimate, because I do not suppose they believe that regeneration follows upon a mere dipping as assuredly as a universal wetting does. A Campbellite must have some reason for promising regeneration to sinners in their baptism, besides simple immersion. This by itself is too bold. What their associated idea is, I am not absolutely advised. I assume as certain that there is some precedent measure—some mental preparation—some ideal—to be recognized, because, without any, they would stand in a supremely ridiculous attitude before all Christendom besides. If I am not mistaken in their theory, it promises regeneration to all who rightly come to immersion as a divinely-appointed ordeal in the economy of salvation. Some of them talk so ungallantly as to justify the popular inference, that if sinners will just come along and receive immersion at their hands, they pledge regeneration as a certainty. Even this does not surprise me. It is one of the evidences of a false theory of religion that its ardent admirers run it into extravagances which outrage all propriety. Simple truth never damages itself by any startling dogmatisms. The tendency of every form of ritualism is to extremes, and the ruling idea is sure to crop out somewhere in its adventurous speculations. By this philosophy it is easy to track the mistake of Mr. Campbell to its origin. His starting-point is, that regeneration followed upon immersion, because God had ordained immersion as the only lawful way of embracing and professing the Christian religion. As to an ordained mode of baptism, all Baptists stood upon the same platform. The good old brotherhood satisfied their estimate of its value by making it a term of Church-membership, and also of Christian communion. They never made it a term of salvation—a fact which ought long ago to have suggested to them the idea of an overestimation in what they really claimed for it. It is sound in theology to say that any thing that can be done without in the salvation of sinners, without interruption to the law of God's own righteousness, must be without essential value in the Church of Christ. The elder Baptists made immersion a term of membership and communion in
the Church: Mr. Campbell makes it a term of salvation, by assuming that compliance with an ordained mode of baptism is the only lawful way of embracing and professing Christianity. This he could not do by declaring immersion essential to salvation, simply as immersion. But this he did do, by representing regeneration as a certain issuance of baptism, because baptism (that is, immersion) was the divine ordinance by which Christianity was to be professed. The regular Baptists, before Mr. Campbell's day, held and practiced upon the apostolic plan as to the relation of regeneration and of baptism. They held to a divine change, a real conversion, antecedent to baptism—a relation of one to the other as clear as practice could make it. But as if blind to the authority of apostolic practice in the inauguration of the Christian Church, where baptism by water is commonly spoken of as following upon the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and where the regular order was carried out always immediately after, Mr. Campbell seems determined to place the two in such relations as to make regeneration appear as superinduced—brought about—by baptism; whereby he degrades the Spirit to give importance to immersion. Water-baptism is regarded by the Church generally as an outward sign of an inward grace—an emblem of spiritual purification. Mr. Campbell has so deranged this order as to make the inner grace only correlative evidence of the necessity and sacred value of the outward act. All must see if this ideal of regeneration in immersion be true, then the Holy Spirit is subordinate to the agency of water-baptism. There is no escape from the conclusion, revolting as it is to sound sense and godly reverence. I lay it down as incontestible, that whatsoever in the economy of salvation is indispensable in working out its grand result, is its most essential element, because the absence of this at any stage of the proceeding is fatal. Therefore, if regeneration only takes place in immersion, of course immersion is the most important step in the case. Mr. Campbell, as I understand it, teaches that regeneration never takes place only in immersion, and never fails to take place in concert with it. This is the theory, and, as I have said, makes immersion the "one thing need-
ful." Now, if regeneration is *not* superinduced by immersion as an ordained agency, then regeneration and immersion have no more relation of order to each other, as cause and effect, than regeneration has with a shower of rain. If regeneration *can* take place independent of baptism, then baptism is not a subsidiary agent, and the Campbellites must confess either that the Holy Ghost is subordinate to immersion, and *cannot convert* a sinner without it, or otherwise that immersion is a dead letter—an inert form—having no part or place in the work of spiritual regeneration. So, then, the whole scheme of the Campbellites is a delusion—an ignis-fatuus.

From the report of a Mormon missionary a few days since, as told to me, I learned he said that the "Mormons were Baptists," (meaning, I suppose, that they immersed in baptizing,) and "held that regeneration and baptism always came off together." Farther he said, "They did not hold that this regeneration fitted for heaven, but that it was an initial step, after which one of their twelve apostles laid hands ceremonially on the heads of these novitiates, and conferred upon them the gift of the Holy Ghost. These deceivers profess to be out and out a second edition of the original Christian Church, claiming to do all things by the hands of their twelve apostles which were done by the original twelve. He said, too, that they would have a missionary in every State. This Mormon heresy seeks to curry favor with the world by putting on the "liquid" garment of the good old Baptists, and offers to insure by promising regeneration as a premium upon immersion. In the ecclesiastical market, regeneration is an article that will always sell if the price is not too high. If, by any device, the purchasers can be persuaded even to hope that the thing offered will do, the least cost will be the highest recommendation. No man was ever better qualified to inaugurate one of these economical errors in religion than Alexander Campbell, and no one ever did a thing of the kind more effectually. Of pure morals, of princely intellect, a zealot by nature, he transfused himself into his converts, and claiming to know that he was right, they became his most enthusiastic supporters. My convictions of truth constrain me to say,
that I regard his theory of religion, as at most and at best, a plausible error—shallow, misleading, and delusive. Nothing is availing in religion but a "new creation." The very term is argumentative, and settles the whole question. None but God can create. Salvation is not through modes, but by the Spirit of God "working in us to will and to do."

We come now to the conclusion of this long discourse, and prefer to wind up with a summary of the doctrines and principles which have been argued and defended, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." God has no children here but by faith in Christ, therefore all that believe according to this rule are the children of God—"For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Here the divine order that those who are to be made Church-members must first become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. This is the ground of their right to Christian baptism. It is evident to me that while nothing but faith in Christ entitles us to Christian baptism, so nothing but Christian baptism entitles us to Church-membership. Hence, when baptized into Christ according to this rule, we do in a most befitting sense "put on Christ," this being the design and end of baptism. O what an obligation is this! How the Church would shine with the mellow light of holiness if the promised fidelity to Christ were always practically remembered! Baptism is the Christian oath of allegiance when we engage at this altar of consecration to put on Christ. An organic visible Church cannot exist without this. Conversion itself, no matter how clear, cannot bring any one within the visible Church, or entitle to any of its peculiar rights. It is by baptism, rightly administered and rightly accepted, that Church-enfranchisement is first gained and afterward maintained. The hour a Church-member becomes knowingly derelict to the obligations assumed when he solemnly, ceremonially puts on Christ, he forfeits his Christian franchise, and throws off his Christian allegiance. And if the Church, having knowledge thereof, suffers these apostate members to remain within the sacred city of God, she makes herself a partaker
of their sins. When discipline is given up, the Church is
given up. It is not election that makes the President, but
his oath of office. In this, and through this, he puts on the
government, becomes its distinct representative, and is a prac-
tical traitor every time he is unfaithful to one of its known
obligations. So with us after we solemnly put on Christ in
baptism. We are bound to be like him, to do like him, to
represent him fully. As we have received him, so we are to
walk in him.

It is in the unity of the faith that we find the true exegesis
of the negations in the text, "There is neither Greek nor
Jew, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor
female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Herein—that is,
in the special unity of genuine faith—all but Christ appre-
hended by faith is lost sight of by every real convert. Like
Paul, they desire to be found in Christ without any of
their own righteousness, being so much better clad in
the righteousness of faith. In Christ there is nothing
but Christ, therefore we can carry nothing with us into
Christ. It is only by this law of faith that Christ can be all
in all. The Jew may be a Jew still—physically considered.
According to the politics of men, he may be proud of his
national blood, but as a sinner justified by faith alone, he
says and feels it to be divinely true, "My blood did me no
good—gave me no preference with God." I am born again,
but it is not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of
the will of man, but of God." It is by virtue of a scheme
which God alone could inaugurate, and at the instance of his
own self-moving will, that I am justified—justified by faith
alone. At the cross I laid down my Abrahamic blood,
counted out my circumcision, feeling that circumcision is
nothing, and that I must not plead or trust in any thing that
does not enter into the meritorious ground and reason of a
sinner's pardon, and that here nothing could enter but "Christ
crucified." He paid all my debt: I paid none—had nothing
to pay with. The condition of my release was to feel the
enormity of my debt, the absoluteness of my poverty, and to
accept of pardon as a gracious gift. Such is the peculiar
tenor and spirit of this economy, that it could not be built upon any basis but free, unmerited grace. To let any thing into it as subsidiary, would have frustrated the grace of God, and proved that merit enough could have been breathed into works to have rendered pardon just on their account. And if merit enough to justify pardon on account of works could not be imparted, none can be imparted.

Here, too, the Greek lays down his philosophy, renounces his thirty thousand gods, and worships the unknown God whom Paul preached to his countrymen on Mars' Hill—Christ Jesus, God over all, blessed for ever. Here the bondman from his humble position is exalted to citizenship in the household of faith, and invested with the freedom the truth alone can give; here also the proud freeman is brought low, laying all his honors at Jesus's feet; and here the man and his wife are made one in Christ, not by marriage, but by faith. It is the doctrine of justification by faith alone which strikes this level, and makes all of God's children one in Christ Jesus. How unchristian-like it is for professors of religion to be saying, "I am of Paul, or of Cephas, or even of Christ," in any self-honoring sense! We are none of us any thing, except what we are in Christ by simple faith: I say simple faith, for if we bring in with it a mode of baptism or the pride of "succession" as giving us any thing like rank in the house of God, our faith is not simple, but complex. An atom of this sort cherished in the heart is a dead fly in the pot of ointment, and its odor is spoiled. If we can be made the children of God only by faith, by that same faith alone can we remain the children of God. We cannot incorporate with it any other term of Christian fellowship without perverting it. I will here ask my Baptist brethren if they included their estimate of immersion among the causative reasons of their acceptance with God through Christ in the hour of their justification? If not, it cannot, since that be made a term of communion. If neither you nor Christ found it needful to regard immersion as included in the plan of salvation, and for reasons essential to the plan, it never can be legitimately warped in as a term of communion. It ought to be, and must be, given
up. If I am a child of God by faith, without immersion, you have no right to disinherit me. All of us who are justified by faith are made one in Christ, and cannot be divinely divided at the communion-table.

I wish to be distinctly understood, and I now declare, that I do not in any sense denounce immersion as a valid mode of baptism. I hold that any mode is valid where water is used in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the administrator and the subject properly understand and rightly appreciate the nature, design, and end of this Christian rite. But I capitally doubt whether baptism is ever properly administered to adults when it is simply done as a matter of course in the order of time. It is both misused and abused, unless the recipient is made to feel its true design, and its moral obligations. Our present disciplinary rule is well adapted to these ends, if our pastors will fully do their duty. My observation is, there is too much hurry and too little preparation for baptism. My advice is, take time, examine closely, and never baptize another convert into the Church until, like David, they swear to keep all God's righteous judgments. Make them feel that every willful departure from this engagement is spiritual perjury. Do this, and the ruinous amalgamation of the Church with the world will cease—it will never cease any other way. A loose manner of receiving members will fill the Church with those pestilent offenders, who, if they were put on trial for their irregularities or violations of a sacred contract, would tell you they never promised not to do these things. And while there would be some hypocrisy in the plea, there would be too much truth in it to be creditable to the proper doorkeepers of the house of God. Let us, brethren, adopt a method of preparing candidates for admission in the Church whereby we may know that they fully comprehend the obligations their baptism imposes. Then Methodism will bud afresh, bearing sweet blossoms and rich fruits.

My position is, that baptism is not an ordinance, for then it would be a mode, and compliance would place modality in baptism in the same category with repentance. Repentance
is a moral necessity. The merit of Christ's death cannot be appropriated without it. Just so it would be with a prescribed mode of baptism. By divine law, the observance of it would be a moral necessity, and to conceive of the merit of Christ as being appropriated for the salvation of a sinner while failing or refusing to comply, is too revolting even for consideration. Let me inquire of immersionists generally, and of the Campbellites especially, whether any one among them believes that a penitent sinner, simply determining that he would not be immersed while reverently intending to be baptized into Christ, when converted, would in any way at all impede his justification by faith? If they answer, as I suppose they will, we do not believe such intention would, or should, hinder his free justification through Jesus Christ, then this question is fully settled. Any thing that has not moral virtue enough in it to make a sentimental rejection of it a bar to divine favor, is not, as a thing, of divine ordination. My readers will see that I hold to baptism as a divine institution, and to the observance of it as a Christian rite. Now, here is the pinch of my closing argument: I believe that every considerate Baptist in the land will admit that the utter rejection of immersion, and indeed of all modality in baptism, as modality, while simple ritual-baptism was kept up in honor of Christ's institution, would not infract a single principle in baptism material to its design. And in its design lies all its religious value.

My second position is, that the unity of the faith proves the unity of the Church. By the unity of the Church, I do not mean the absorption of all into one. This would be the mere triumph of some one form of Churchism over the true idea of unity. There is a striking likeness between the two theories, requiring the absorption of all other Church-organizations into their own in order to be in the Church at all. On one side we place the Roman Catholics and the Episcopalians: each of these claim to be "the Church," by virtue of apostolic succession. On the other side we place the immersionists: these claim to be "the Church," because nothing but immersion is baptism, and they are the true, unadulterated immers-
sion Church. These parties cannot both be right. This fact makes it morally certain that both are wrong. The grounds upon which each claims the distinction of genuineness are extraneous to every thing *intrinsic* to the true Church, according to all the delineations given by the apostles. As for instance, it is said, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." The kingdom of God is the Church of God. To this institution, as Christ set it up, "meats and drinks" (by which all outward things are meant) are extraneous to it. They are foreign from the composition of the spiritual Church of Christ, are not *intrinsic*, cannot be. When the true Church is sought for, the first thing to be done is to lop off all these extraneous things, or, in other words, go beyond the line of meats and drinks into the spiritual chamber of the soul, and see if you can find there peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and if found therein, the true Church is found. These spiritual ones make up the true Church of Christ. These righteous, peaceful, joyful believers are the members of Christ's body, whether found in one Church, as now made up, or in all. Doubtless in all there is a remnant according to the election of grace. But I cannot dismiss this subject just here. There is a Church among us in which are more "meats and drinks," and these more pompously served up than elsewhere, but in it is less of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost than in any other Protestant Church. I speak of these intrinsic evidences of the kingdom of God as Paul understood and applied them; which, I believe, was in the sense of an outspoken joy—a religion which told of its glorious origin in songs and words of suitable praise. But the Episcopalians feel and express disgust at all emotional rapture, all religious excitement. I verily believe that the ministers of this sect have more faith in, and a decided preference for, a membership that would scrupulously attend to their ritualistic worship in Church-seasons, and, in their turn, play cards and dance, over one that would denounce these pleasures and occasionally overflow with joy in the Holy Ghost. Why is this? Because the extraneous has been overrated, and the intrinsic
undervalued. They cannot be safely bundled together. Paul's negative principle must be applied. That which cannot impart grace must be nothingized. But here is a Church anxious for Church-unity, yet sees no possible way to bring it about but by the absorption of all others into herself, and this, in her complacency, she considers a necessity—not a compromise. A necessity, because there is no other apostolic Church but herself; and if she were swallowed up in the immersion Church, claiming the same exclusive rights, but on a different line, it would be really Church-extinction. Theirs is the only boat in the heavenly line that is running under the apostolic charter, and we are kindly informed that we had better dissolve and come aboard of this old Church craft. But I solemnly demur, till she shows her papers signed by the Holy Ghost, as aforetime. I know no other divine succession. This, by the grace of God, we Methodists have in common with other Churches who hold by Christ the Head. The unity of the Church can only be in the oneness and the sameness of faith and Christian experience. The saints who are perfected by the harmonious labors of Christ's appointed ministers—Paul to plant and Apollos to water—all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Now will any ritualist or any immersionist say this status in religion cannot be reached except through their fancied mediums? I hope not. But if this state can be reached without passing through either of their glorified ordeals, then neither of them can enter into the reasons for Christian fellowship. As they cannot bring in any thing saving, the absence of them cannot justify any discount on Christian character; yet every Episcopalian thinks that I am not as well qualified to consecrate the elements for a sacrament as I would have been if I had been inducted into my office by one of their bishops. This is equivalent to the opinion that Christ cannot have a regular ministry upon the earth, unless it is set in order by the imposition of Episcopal hands. Shocking to relate—immodest, not to say impious, to claim. And every immersionist that says I am not worthy to
commune with him because I was not immersed, virtually declares that his own worthiness to commune is derived from immersion, for he rejects me on this footing alone. To all these selfish, exclusive views I am opposed on the ground of Christian charity. If, with all these canonized notions, these brethren are compelled to believe that a large part of all the souls redeemed from earth and sin, and now in glory, reached their heavenly home from folds outside of their particular pastures, then it is passing strange that either persists in disuniting the Church of Christ on these outside and immaterial issues—immaterial, because any Christian organization in which the cardinal doctrines of Christianity are taught, embraced, believed, and followed, can, will, and does furnish as many souls meet for the kingdom of heaven, without the claim of succession or the charm of immersion, as it could with either or both of these appended. Will any one among them deny this? If so, let him declare it, and I will vouch for his being ever afterward under the ban of public opinion as a senseless bigot. If, then, in spite of sectarian preferences and prejudices, they are constrained to believe that heaven is daily filling up with the spirits of just men made perfect, who were neither born nor nourished in their particular inclosures, let all agree and declare that souls fit for heaven are fit for fellowship anywhere and everywhere where Christians commune. This charity will abolish close communion.

As to the Episcopalians, the bar to free communion arises from their vain conceit of priestly efficacy transmitted through apostolic succession. Hence, they believe that when I and others out of their line consecrate the sacramental elements, they remain as they were, and we eat mere bread and drink mere wine; but when they officiate, the communicants do virtually eat Christ's flesh and drink his blood. They are not close-communionists, I believe, so far as the laity is concerned; but unless the elements are consecrated by their priesthood, they are without sacramental value for anybody. To thinking, reasoning men, I say this sacramentalism is barefaced heresy. It is both remarkable and significant that this divisive spirit as to the Lord's-supper should have made its appearance
only in two branches of the Church accredited as orthodox. These are the Protestant Episcopalian and the regular Baptist Churches. In each of them, as I understand causation, the divisive agency is perfectly similar, and in each runs directly into what we call "sacramentalism." We mean by it some specialty wherein or whereby efficacy is obtained. Episcopalians derive it from their apostolic lineage. The Baptists find it in the doctrine that immersion, in its mode, is a divine ordinance. The assumption that God has chosen immersion out of all the possible ways of using water in baptism, and that Christ sanctified it by being immersed himself, couples itself naturally and logically with the belief that some sacramental efficacy is conveyed or confirmed by immersion; or, at any rate, that the regular agents and subjects of it are invested thereby with peculiar exclusive rights and privileges. Unless they take this ground, their rejection of other Christians from the Lord's table is an arbitrary illegality.

We come now to remark upon the spirit of free communion, its moral beauty and perfect harmony with the genius of our holy religion. See Paul's lively description of the true Church: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit; for the body is not one member, but many." We may be baptized into several branches of the Church, denominationally considered, but in the order of God we cannot be baptized into but one Church—the general Church which constitutes the mystical body of Christ. How strange that any one Church on earth should assume virtually to expel from the general Church all the members thereof who differ from them as to how water should be applied to believers in their baptism! To bar any one from the Lord's supper who claims to be a believer and a member of Christ's body, because he is not a Baptist, is to declare that there is no other divinely-acknowledged Church but their own; or admitting him to be a member of Christ's general Church, and
refuse him the communion because he has not been immersed, is to be guilty of schism in the body of Christ. Either alternative is a sad one. The whole dilemma comes of investing immersion with the vain conceit of special divine complacency. Strong figurative expressions, referring to baptism, do frequently occur in the New Testament, and they commend it to our attention as an institution of moral force and meaning, chiefly, however, as an open formal espousal of Christ. To prevent just such evils as have been forced upon it, and to rescue it from all possible connection with sacramental efficacy, Peter tells us that we are “figuratively saved by baptism”—not really, as if there were any virtue in baptism—but by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, faith in which we thereby profess. No moral change is effected in us by baptism, either directly or indirectly, not even the putting away of the filth of the flesh. It is simply the answer of a good conscience toward God. The true convert glories in his baptism because he is baptized into Christ, who was once delivered unto death for his sins, but by his inherent divinity was raised again for his justification. The common belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ as the great confirmatory seal of gospel doctrine, should be a common bond of unity, fraternity, and fellowship among all the people of God. Names, and questions, and modes, should all be merged and lost in the tie which unites in the faith and hope of a common salvation.

If, in this long argument, I have said a word to aggrieve any child of God, it is from my infirmity, and not from my heart. “Grace, mercy, and peace be upon all them who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity.” It is true, in my comments upon what I think absurd in doctrine, I may have impinged upon some morbid sensibility, but even this was not prompted by unkind feeling. My strongest remarks, perhaps, lie against the close-communion error of my dear Baptist brethren. I say what I mean—my dear Baptist brethren. If I did not love them, I should not wish to commune with them, nor have them commune with me. I do long to see free Christian communion among us. It is not worth while to spend breath about it, there is no heart-cheering union between us,
and never can be until, with open hearts, we commune together. I do not ask the Baptists to give up immersion as their chosen mode of baptism, but to reduce their estimate of it to the level of Paul's negation, when he said "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing." Come, brethren, we are one in Christ Jesus. We never can be one in immersion; and if we could, it might be in immersion only. If we are one in Christ, and will quit disputing about outward things and lovingly celebrate our Saviour's dying love together, we soon shall love one another as Christ loved us. Before I die, I hope to see all these old stumbling-blocks taken out of the way, and all the Churches of Christ drinking in the genial spirit of the apostle in his salutation to the Corinthian brethren, "Unto the Church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both theirs and ours—grace be unto you and peace from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

The great apostle, set by divine commission for the defense of the gospel, said, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." This comprehensive description of the Christian scheme is full and conclusive. One Lord: the Jehovah of the Jewish Church and the Christ of the Christian Church, "both theirs and ours." One faith: all true believers realize the great idea of one faith, and this one faith is well called the faith of God, because it rests upon him as he rests upon himself, satisfied that all is sure in good time. One baptism: the Christian baptism, of course, all Jewish baptisms having ended in the ceremonial priestly washing of Christ. But one baptism cannot mean one mode of baptism, for baptism, in its evangelical import, cannot exist in mode. Its material essence must exist in its gospel design. And perhaps, after all, the baptism of the Holy Ghost—the thing typified by water-baptism—is the "one baptism" of the apostle. But a truce to all arguments and explanatory comments. Surely my brethren of every name will join with me to crown Jesus our Saviour Lord of all. On earth he is our only hope, in heaven he will be the
center of all attraction. In his vision of the everlasting city of God, John says, "And I saw no temple therein, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it, for the glory of the Lord did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Surely in heaven we shall all be one: there shall be neither Methodist nor Presbyterian, neither Baptist nor Episcopalian. Made one in Christ on earth by faith in him, by faith in him at the expense of all denominational plumage, the epitaph upon the tomb of each will be, "A sinner saved by grace," and in heaven, harping upon the harps of God. But one stanza shall be sung by all, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father, to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever. Amen." O then let us come together here and now in the sweet fellowship of Christ! Let us keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, and, in the loving companionship of earth, realize a growing meetness for the final communion of saints in heaven! Amen and amen.
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