PLUNGING
A
Subject of BIGOTRY,
When made essential to
BAPTISM.

BIGOTRY is an excessive Fondness for a Man's own Sentiments, or standing up for this, or the other Set of Opinions, with more Conceit and Eagerness than the Reason and Importance of them require. — True Zeal is always according to Knowledge, measured by the Moments of Things, and within due Bounds: But BIGOTRY is a disproportionate Concern to the Weight of the Matter, and to the Prejudice of some other Truth.


LONDON,
Printed and Sold by M. FENNER, at the Turk's-Head in Gracechurch-Street. MDCCXLI.
ON PLUNGING IN BAPTISM.

HAT man, who wisheth well to all men, whose good will and kind affections are truly catholic, who regards every man as a creature of God, and from the love he has to him that created, loves him that is created by him; every such man will feel a painful concern about the happiness of others, especially, when he perceives how first principles lose their spring and moment, by trifles engaging the attention. Men usually fix on those things as the subjects of contentious, angry zeal, which the doctrine of Je-
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Thus has proposed to be the occasions of charity, and a suitable means of displaying the benevolent affections.

For my own part, I am of opinion, that such mistaken conduct should be freely examined, and the folly of it, as much as possible exposed.—Nor would I, whilst cenfuring the bigotry of another, shew a temper unworthy the christian character; being fully persuaded, that neither sprinkling, pouring, nor plunging, should be looked upon, as sufficient occasion of any abatement of my esteem, love, and brotherly affection. The modes of baptism should certainly be placed among those indifferent things, concerning which, all christians have the liberty either to use the one or the other. And in no one instance wherein christians may differ, has any person the least right to judge or cenfure his brother, or to despise or contemn him.

Let us not therefore judge one another any more; but judge this rather, that no man put a stumbling block, or an occasion to fall in his brother's way. It is very dangerous to make that essential or necessary, either to christian communion, or salvation, which the doctrine of Christ, and of his apostles have not.—

The question before us, is, what foundation can be discovered in scripture, for laying any stress upon plunging in baptism?—Nor is the question unreasonable or impertinent; for, it is well known,
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known, that there are numbers among us, who will have it, that Christian Baptism must imply immersion, understood by so plunging in water, as to cover the whole body: and that pouring, or sprinkling of water on the body, is no baptism.

But inasmuch as these persons must allow that the word βαφτιζεω is sometimes used, nay, frequently, for pouring or sprinkling: and since they have no manner of evidence that either John the fore-runner, or the disciples of Jesus, did so plunge and cover with water, it seems wrong to lay so great a stress upon it.

That John, or the disciples of our Lord did plunge, is not a clear point, as shall be shewn from many places, where the word can intend no more than pouring or sprinkling; and likewise from those passages which are said to prove that Christian Baptism expressly implies plunging, i.e. covering all over with water. And,

1. Take we notice of some of those Texts, which do not use the word for plunging: and they are as followeth, Mark viii, 4.—And when they come from the market, except they wash they eat not. And many other things they do, which they have received to hold, as the washing, βαφτιζεως, of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables. In the first instance, it is not probable that they plunged themselves, and cover'd their whole bodies with water, before they eat;—and in the
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the latter, tho' they might plunge their pots and cups, and brazen vessels, yet it is not likely they should plunge their beds; for so the word rendered tables (χρυσών) is generally understood.—

Of this variety of baptisms, we have mention made, Heb. ix. 10. and divers baptisms.—πανικομα with which washings or baptisms are after notified, as being only perfusions or sprinklings; see ver. 13, 19, 21. such as, sprinkling the unclean with the blood of bulls, &c. and sprinkling the book and the people with the blood of calves, and of goats, &c. and the tabernacle and vessels sprinkled with blood: these belong to the ναζο-πος καλλικομος, the divers washings or baptisms. So that the word is evidently used for pouring or sprinkling, and cannot here either intend or allow of plunging.

Again, we are told, 1 Cor. x. 2. that the Israelites were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea. But sure none will say, that they were all plunged.—That was not their baptism, but the baptism of the Egyptians; for so Castellio—obruti sunt mari & plumbi ritu in aquas nobiles demersi, Exod. xv. 10. the sea rushed in upon them, and like lead did they plunge or sink in the mighty waters!—

The same word is used, as signifying to tinge or colour with baptizing; Rev. xix. 13. And he was clothed with a vesture dipt in blood,—σαρκαμισων—but even here, when one would suppose the washing did require most time to stain, tinge
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Tinge or colour it, it intends not plunging; but is an evident allusion to the lxxxiii of Isaiah, the beginning; and by a lively similitude of a great general returning from the slaughter of his enemies, with his garments stained, and sprinkled over with the blood of the slain; so is the Lamb of God described—but generals don't use to plunge and imbrue their garments in blood.—

In these places, the word does not necessarily imply baptism understood as plunging: but on the contrary, it intimates baptism by pouring, or sprinkling, or partial washing.

To get rid of the force of this objection against plunging, it should be shewn that the word, baptizo, when expressing the christian rite, has as many places where it necessarily implies plunging; or, at least, it ought to be shewn, that in some one place it implies an absurdity, to understand it otherwise.—But, till this is done, let none who contend for plunging, boast that they have the infallibly right sense of the word, in their practice; and that all who differ from them, are in the wrong.

Under this head, I shall make a citation of what Dr. Potter has observ'd, concerning the practice of washing, among the Greeks and Romans; viz. 'That the ancient Greeks had no Balneos like those of later times—but had a large basin or vessel to wash in—and that likewise the ancient Romans had a vessel in their
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"their own houses, wherein they washed, "call'd lavatrina, or latrina, which was after-
wards termed balneum.—That the Greeks "had, among other rooms in their Baheos, "one called Baptisterion, which was an hot "Bath; and another, Loutron, which was a "cold Bath."—And as to the times of their "bathing; "they usually bathed (he tells us) after "war, journeyings, or any fatigue.—And that "after bathing, it was the custom both in "Greece and other hot countries, to ANOINT "the body.” But as to their decency of bath-
ing, "in the heroical ages, men and women, "without distinction, bathed themselves in "rivers *".

But more modest were the primitive christ-
ians, says Dr. Cave, for when they were brought to the font, and were first stripped of their garments (intimating thereby their putting off the old man which is corrupt with his deceitful lusts) and that all occasions of scandal and immodesty might be prevented in so sacred an action, the men and women were baptized in their distinct apartments, the women having Deaconesses to attend them, to undress and dress them, to stand about and overshadow them that nothing of indecency might appear. †

† Cave's Prim. Christianity: Part i. pag. 317.
We are next to attend to those texts of scripture on which so much stress is laid about plunging in baptism.

And all persons, even the least acquainted with the controversy, know, that the practice of John the Harbinger, is urg'd. It is said, Matt. iii. 11. that John baptized with water unto repentance, but that the Messias should baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire. Compare Mark i. 8. Luke iii. 16. John i. 33. All which texts agree in their description of this doctrine of John's, and of our Lord's baptism. Now, if baptizing, when applied to John, necessarily signified plunging over head in water, and covering the whole body; what must the word import, when applied to our Lord's baptizing with the Holy Spirit and fire?—Must we in the one case suppose covering all over with water, necessary, as the cleansing rite: and not suppose that the other method of purification should be alike extensive?—but, it was certainly sufficient that the Holy Spirit descending like an hovering flame upon Jesus, and upon the heads of the apostles and first christians, was all the apparent or external application or symbol, which mark'd out the separated persons. And why should not pouring water on the head of our Lord by John the Baptist, determine John's baptism to be valid, as well as our Lord's only sprinkling with the Spirit, or, by an effusion of pointed flame on the heads of his apostles and
and witnesses of his resurrection, for this reason be called, a baptism; and be esteemed valid; tho' he did not dip or plunge men over head in the Spirit? — An unprejudiced mind will find it very difficult to discern the reason of such difference. But if we were to look for analogy, or resemblance between John’s applying water, and the visible token of the Spirit coming upon Jesus, we should be inclined to conclude, that John had not plunged Jesus, but only poured water upon his head, to which the dove-like descent or pouring of the Spirit answered.—The fondness those Gentlemen shew for analogy, in mode, will vindicate such an interpretation in the case before us, and shew it to be, at least, argumentum ad hominem.

As to John’s choosing to baptize in Enon, because there was much water, John iii. 23. this does not seem to carry anything in it that will be conclusive on the side of dipping, or plunging.—It may be otherways accounted for, as, there being many waters, streams, or rivulets, would render it more convenient and commodious for John and his disciples; for as much as thereby they had it in their power to be all employed in baptizing the crowds who came from Jerusalem, and the country around them. And as to the much, or great, or deep water, if we consider whereabouts it was that John baptized, or if we regard the wilderness of Judah, as dry and thirsty, Psal. lxiii. 1. i. e. not
not very well stored with waters, it will follow, that whatever the wildernes was where John baptized, the much, or great, or deep may be understood in a comparative view, and will afford us nothing conclusive. But suppose (for supposition sake) that the θῆκα θαλασσα, intended to hint to us the depth of the waters, or intended a large river, like the Euphrates; or should we stretch our imagination so far, as to think it might intimate the roaring of an high sea, as in other places *, we should only by this means render it more difficult to account for their safety in going into it; and for their capacity of performing the religious rite, when in it.—

Besides, tho’ the waters of Enon were allowedly deep enough for plunging, and large enough to accommodate the crowds that came to be wash’d in them; is it not strange, that no hint should ever be once let fall, that might inform us whether the baptized quitted their clothes, or went in with them on.—Surprizing! that not one word should ever express or intimate that they were actually plunged; or that they were plunged naked, or in garments.—If they were not plunged, but only stept into the rivulet, in order to have some water poured upon them, there is no difficulty would arise from this silence; because we are inform’d of the nature of their dress, which would easily admit of such practice without much trouble, or inconvenience.

* Dr. Doddridge’s Fam. Expos. Vol. i. pag. 159.
Nor should any say, that this is too mean a circumstance to be taken notice of, for the decency or indecency of the rite would depend upon it, if plunging, and especially plunging naked was essential to Christian baptism.

Under this head, which respects men's uneasy scruples about the quantity of water; we might expect that the tender conscience should be as much, nay more solicitous about its quality, that is to say, whether it should be hard or soft, fresh or salt, spring or pond, river or sea water.—

It is not sufficient that John baptized in Enon, where were much or many waters, unless we know the quality of them. They might be running waters or standing pools: or they might be wells that had been sunk there for the convenience of cattle. And if the many or much waters should allude to the roaring of an high sea, they might be salt waters.

But in reply, it may be said, that theayer could not be supposed to have any salt or sea water in his house; and therefore, we may suppose that it was fresh water. Grant it; it does not yet appear whether it was running or standing water that he had laid in, any more than what quantity. And methinks if either quality or quantity was of importance, one would have expected

† Cave's Prim. Christianity. P. i. pag. 317. as before.
expected much clearer hints concerning the quality; because, this seems to deserve in its own nature a first regard: for supposing a man would apply an instituted baptismal rite as a symbol of purity, and was so situated that he could not have water sufficient to plunge, but what was foul and muddy, as from standing and unwholesome lakes; and he could, at the same time, be able to come at a clear and sweet spring, that would admit of his applying the pure element only by pouring or sprinkling, any stranger-by would be able to discern the aptness of the latter symbol in a light much preferable to the former.

But, that neither quantity nor quality is essential to Christian baptism, is deducible from the silence of the sacred historians: for even Lydia herself and her household, tho' baptized after prayer by the river-side, are not said to have gone into it, or to have been plung'd in it. Nay, their not being said to have gone into it, probably may intimate that it was a deep river, and not so fit for baptism as the many waters, or rivulets, or wells, where John baptized.—The mark or note of plunging, from their going down into the water, and coming up out of it, is quite lost in the case of Lydia, and the instance of the Jailer will only suffer a warm imagination to invent plunging.

But I proceed to consider the strength of some of their chief fortresses.—And the greatest
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It rests to be laid on the two following passages of scripture, Rom. vi. 3, 4. and Col. ii. 12.—The first is, Rom. vi. 3, 4. Know ye not that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death? therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

Baptizing into Christ, all must allow to be a figure, and to intend no more than baptizing into an open profession of his doctrine: but the author of it having been crucified, the doctrine which the apostles and first christians professed, was that of a crucified Jesus. For grace, or favour, reigneth thro' righteousness unto eternal life, by this crucified Jesus; tho' sin, or the one offence had reigned unto death, see chap. v. 9, 10, 12 and 21 ver. compared. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; i.e. into this doctrine of the crofs. But what was this? see ver. 10. In that he died, he died unto sin once. Now, sin had no manner of place in him, stripped of a figure: but his dying unto sin once, must intend his willing subjection to the curse of that positive law, in the day thou eatest, &c. which had denounced death upon the humane family. Death was not imposed on him as a demerit, but as the body which he took upon him was humane, and so capable of mortality, he, agreeable to his mission, gave up his life a sacrifice to the
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fin and rage of men; he died unto sin once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. And the privilege we are initiated into, by baptism, thews us a most reconciling view of our perilous state; since death is destroyed by his dying once, or, once submitting to death; for in that he liveth, he liveth unto God.—And if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection, ver. 5. That this cannot intend any resemblance from the baptismal water, seems evident; because, then it would have been rendered, we also have been in the likeness of his resurrection, when rising out of the water, and not we also shall be.—

The being planted in the likeness of his death, don't seem to intend the being plunged in water, as such plunging bears no resemblance to his death, or crucifixion; for there, the blood which came from his head, hands, feet, and side, did not imbrue his whole body, or cover it, as a body immersed or plunged in water. Nor does a likeness of his resurrection stand imag'd by the rising out of the water. It evidently refers to what is future, and has for its antecedent our (the apostles) so being planted together in the likeness of his death, as to be interested in the atonement, to be justified by his blood. Knowing this, that our old man, (or this animal life) is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin; for he that is dead, is freed
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freed from sin; which expressions seem to refer to our (the apostle’s) being secure of life, tho’ the body must be dissolved. And, notwithstanding our being dead with Christ, subject to die once as well as Christ, yet we are assured of life with him; forasmuch, as he being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death has no more dominion over him. And tho’ this mortal body of ours must be destroyed, yet, henceforth, (μηκέτι, non amplius,) yet no more shall we be subject to its dominion; when like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we also shall walk in newness of life, ver. 4.

Applying the phrase, walk in newness of life, to a future state of existence, I imagine, may be defended, from its being the only state in which we can resemble Christ, considered as raised from the dead by the glory of the Father. And if we keep our eye upon sin still reigning to death, ch. v. ver. 21. notwithstanding the abounding grace of God in Jesus; we may then understand the question directly put upon this, ch. vi. ver. 1. to have respect to sin’s reigning unto death; and, consequently, we may look upon St. Paul as using a metonymy, putting the cause for the effect, sin for death: hereupon the question will be understood thus; shall we continue under the reign of sin, under death, that grace may abound? far from it; this is every way inconsistent: some of us are dead to sin, how after this shall we live in it? or, be under its dominion. And the manner
ner of our being dead to sin, ye know; viz. our being [emphatically] baptized into Christ's death.

If this rendering be just, then the walking in newness of life, would fitly be expressive of the after-state, or of a resurrection from the dead, in resemblance of Christ's being raised from the dead, by the glory of the Father.

I have found the word, newness, but twice used in the New Testament, i.e. here, and chap. vii. 6. There it is joined to Spirit, newness of Spirit, and refers to their being dead to the Mosaic law, as become the subjects of a new constitution.—No impropriety then appears in St. Paul's expressing himself thus, with reference to the state he should be in, when raised up from the dead, like to his Lord: forasmuch, as his walking in newness of life, would suit the restitution or re-creating of all things, the new body, the resurrection body, and the new heavens and new earth in which dwells righteousness.—

Besides, ver. 15. seems to shew, that the question put, ver. 1. refers to our (the Apostle's) subjection to death, rather than to his continuing the slave of sin, or vice. And this sense may be confirm'd from ver. 14. for he had declared, that sin should not have dominion over the converts, no more than over him, because they were not under the law but
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Under grace. Upon the mention of which, he fees a perverse question arising in their minds, viz. Whether this would be a toleration or license for their sinning? and he answers, far from it.

He must then in this former part of the chapter, have death, and not transgression in view; and security from death, as obtain'd by the death and resurrection of Jesus; or, his argument through the whole chapter will seem very indistinct and confused.

Thus the apostle appears, to me, to be describing the high advantages secured to the christian, who has embraced the doctrine of his Lord, whom he before has been placing in contrast with the first Adam; and therein shewn, that the benefits confer'd by Jesus, are of an infinitely superior nature, to those lost by the first Adam. So that although the questions are put, ver. 1, 2. viz. Whether we shall continue in sin, that grace may abound? And how shall we that are dead to sin live any longer therein? Yet, if understood of vice, the direct answer to these questions appears not to take place, till ver. 11, 12. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin; but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lust thereof.—But if from ver. 3. to ver. 11. be understood as an immediate answer to the ques-
tions put, *ver. 1, 2.* the sense and reasoning will perhaps be plain and intelligible, should we apply the paragraph to the apostles, who were, in an high sense, *baptized into Christ's death!* as may be illustrated from such passages as these, *Matth. xx. 23.* *Ye shall indeed drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.*—In which sort of baptisms, *St. Paul* says, he had often been; *in deaths often,* *2 Cor. xi. 23.*—*I die daily,* *1 Cor. xv. 31.* And how many converts to Christianity (says Dr. *S. Clarke*) in the primitive ages, before they could be baptized, were carried immediately to *martyrdom?* yet no one doubted, but their dying *literally* with and for Christ, was more than equivalent to their being *figuratively* buried with him by baptism into death.—*Serm. Vol. vii. pag. 253.*

**But upon the custom and practice of the primitive ages, subsequent to the apostles, I lay no stress.—**

**Sufferings and death for the cause of Christ** were a proper *baptism,* as the efficacy of Christ's doctrine was very significantly exhibited by such death and sufferings.

**Besides,** there seems to be a great agreement between the reasoning of *St. Paul* here, and in that *xvth of 1st Cor.* *There,* he had been asserting the foundation of the christian's hopes of a resurrection to eternal life, upon Christ's
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Christ's being risen, and become the first fruits of them that sleep; and that since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; that as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive, ver. 20, 21, 22. And then he takes notice of the exaltation of Jesus: but at ver. 29. he draws this inference; else what shall they do, which are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? why are they then baptized for the dead? and why stand we in jeopardy every hour? and in ver. 31, 32. he mentions his own perils. After that, he expatiates upon the nature of the resurrection; and concludes the chapter with an exhortation to his brethren, to be steadfast.—A parallel to this, we have in Rom. v. and vi. —We are then to consider St. Paul, as having, in chap. v. represented Adam and Christ in contrast, and shewed the great advantage that the mediation of Jesus introduced; — and in chap. vi. representing the certainty of the doctrine, as built upon the resurrection of Jesus, and his dying no more. Hence, it is not at all unnatural for him to mention himself, as being buried with Christ in baptism; and to keep in his eye the security of immortal life which he had through him,—and after this, to enforce the doctrine upon christians.

Nor can we suppose St. Paul to have laid any manner of stress upon the mode of water-baptism here; since we find him, 1 Cor. i, 14.
and onward, glorying, that had he baptized but few; and that baptism was of small importance compared with the preaching of the gospel; for Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel.

The other passage of Scripture on which so much stress is laid, is, Col. ii. 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him, through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead.

Here the advocates for plunging would have it, that this must refer to the rite of water-baptism; to our being covered with water, or buried with him in it; and to our rising again out of it, as answering to his resurrection. But the wherein also, is not just; for the same phrase is rendered, ver. 11. In whom also, &c.—In whom also you are risen together; and the burying with him, confirms this rendering. So that if we attend to the argument, it can intend no more than that by baptism, they professed to embrace the christian doctrine, and to renounce Judaism, and all pagan and idolatrous rites and customs; for the twentieth verse is a comment upon this; if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world—this is the being buried with him. But it cannot refer to the rite of water-baptism, intimating, as some would have it, a plunging or covering over with water, as Christ was by John in Jordan. For, it is not probable that
that John did plunge our Lord; but if he did, and that this was the custom of the Jews, in their baptism, yet this burying with Christ in baptism, can by no means refer to that resemblance of him; for, he remain'd a conformist to Judaism in many respects till he had fulfilled his ministry; and the handwriting of ordinances, he took not out of the way, till he nailed them to his cross! so that being dead with him from the rudiments of the world, or being buried with him in baptism, as it here respects an absolute freedom from all the carnal ordinances of Jew or Gentile, must have reference to the death or cross of Christ. And baptism being the external sign of men's acknowledging his doctrine and mission, would presuppose and include their being dead with him to these rudiments, tho' they had no more than a small quantity of water applied by infusion, aspersion, or pouring.

Farther, if plunging in water must be understood in these places; I should ask, who we have now that are the proper subjects of baptism? none, unless they be Jews, who throw off Judaism; or Gentiles, who renounce idolatry; or men, who have lived under the dominion of sin. Men cannot, with any propriety, be plunged in order to shew their being dead and buried from that they never indulged, embraced, or submitted to; and how they can be buried with Christ from sin, or from the Mosaic law, in baptism, I know not.
The blessed Jesus was without spot, and had no guile. And the Jewish ordinances he died not unto at his baptism, they were nailed to his cross, and blotted out there, not by immersion, but rather by aspersion.

Farther, as the word baptizo, is capable of different senses, and has been differently applied by the sacred writers themselves, we might reasonably have expected some expletive, that should have fasten'd down the sense to plunging: so that when used concerning the Christian rite of water-baptism, none might by the ambiguity of the word, be led into any doubt concerning it. And certainly if the thing had been of importance, this would have been done. But as the strong term of burying, very probably, has no reference to water-baptism, when annexed to the word baptisma, it will by no means lend us any aid in determining its signification, on the side of plunging.

Nay, should we imagine that the word there intended plunging, we should be difficulty set to find out the moral or spiritual meaning of the mode. For as applied now, few Jews renounce Judaism, or are plung'd. Many, I doubt not among Christians that are plung'd, have had no habits of vice to renounce; have no new religion to make a public profession of, and openly to embrace,
but have been all their days putting on Christ, without making provision for the flesh, to fulfil its lusts. How these are buried with Christ in baptism, to sin, and how they rise in it to newness of life, is difficult to discover. They have had no putting off the old man, with his deeds, which are corrupt.—And if we should understand it as referring to the doctrine of a dead and risen Jesus, our being plunged in water has no manner of resemblance with it. The manner of his descending into Hades seems to have nothing in it imitable by us; unless our actual dissolution be. Nor can rising out of the water convey any similar idea to his resurrection, the manner or modus of which, was hid from the observation of all men.

The most then, that can possibly be made of these texts, as supposing the practice of plunging, is, that if they do respect water-baptism, they are nothing more than an allusion to that mode of dipping or plunging. They enter not into the nature of an institution; but only express the manner in which they baptized, in those hot countries.—They can intend no more, for even where the order is given for the disciples to go and baptize, not one word is said about all nations being dipped or plunged; nor that any one nation should; no, nor any one person. Families, we find, whole households baptized together. One household baptized in their
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their own house; but no quantity of water mentioned.—But should we understand the burying with Christ in baptism, Rom vi. to refer to St. Paul in his own person, as it seems probable it must be so refer'd, then we should expect to have had some account of his having been plung'd himself, Acts ix. 18. at his baptism: whereas we have not one word about it, nor of his going out of the house of Judas to receive his baptism, in his weak and infirm condition.—

Once more; should we grant that the christian baptismal rite was administered by plunging; as this mode of the rite would be suitable to an hot climate; it will not thence follow, that 'tis suitable to a cold one. None will pretend that a rite can lose the nature of a rite. And if it cannot, then the change of circumstances, will render it fit or unfit. Instances of which sort of rites the Jewish state abounded with.—Their washings, and purifications, numbers of them, would have had no fitness or suitabless in them in a cold climate.—They were local, tho' positive institutions, and tended to their health; preserving them more free from infectious distempers. — But as great care was taken, by their laws, to preserve modesty and chastity of body among them, as well as cleanliness and health, we cannot suppose that their bathings were promiscuous. So that the
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the difficulty will recoil upon us, if we imagine that the crowds of the first converts were dipped, or plunged in baptism. For, inasmuch as we have no account of women baptizing of the women, and of men baptizing only the men, it would have brought an early reproach upon the christian rite, if plunging had been the practice.

Lest it should be thought that Tit. iii. 5. was wilfully pass'd over, because of its weight, I shall add it here;—according to his mercy be saved us by the washing of regeneration. ἀφ' δικαίου λαβαζόμενοι, if strictly rendered, should be the washing-place of regeneration, or the bath of regeneration. But who sees not that here the figure is exceedingly high.—The place wherein we are washed, does not surely, in any proper sense, contribute to our salvation. If it did, then there would be a material cause producing an immaterial and spiritual effect.—The Romanists have indeed shewn us, in many astonishing instances, to what extravagancies our laying stress on modes and rituals may carry us.—

Thus the texts lie, in my view; if I mistake them, it is after some pains taken to understand the true sense of them; nor would my mistaking their direct sense help the argument, for, as I have already ob-
served, should they allude to the mode of baptism; they will conclude nothing farther, than that plunging in baptism was used in an hot country. They can no way recommend or enforce the mode upon us,—unless it could be proved that a greater quantity of water makes a stronger impression upon the moral temper of the mind, and has a greater aptitude to make men die to sin, and live to God, than a lesser quantity of water has.—

Moreover, here might be subjoined a presumptive argument against plunging; and that is, that since plunging was common to bathing, it is not probable that it should be adopted as the mode of a sacred rite. We know that eating bread and drinking wine, in the common usage of it, i.e. so as to make a meal, or to satisfy hunger and thirst, was not permitted in the other christian rite, but looked upon by St. Paul as a profanation of the Supper; 1 Cor. xi. 20, 21, 22. And if analogy might here take place, then to plunge in baptism would be no other than a profane use of water; it having been the common way of bathing.—This argument against plunging, seems to have as firm a basis, as most, if not all that are brought for it: none of them rising much, if any, above presumption.—

But it is farther said, by the advocates for plunging, that going down into the water, and coming up out of the water, do imply

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immersion, Acts viii. 38, 39. — Was this the case; it would prove too much; for both Philip and the Eunuch, are said to do so: and if it implies plunging, then Philip was plung'd as well as the Eunuch. But there being nothing that will account for the fitness of Philip's being plung'd, we must not imagine that going down into the water, and coming up out of it, are expressions which intimate plunging.

Besides, the prepositions es and ex, rendered into, and out of, are as justly rendered to, and from. Tho', allowing that the country was a land of hills, and of valleys, and that the springs run among the valleys, Deut. xi. 11. Psal. civ. 10. it is a very natural rendering, going down to, and coming up from, or out of.

Add we to this, that the circumstance of dipping or plunging, don't appear to have the advantage of pouring or sprinkling in the sacred text. Nor is one or the other form or mode at all essential to baptism, consider'd as a christian rite, neither is it probable it should have any force given it, forasmuch as the other christian rite, viz. the Lord's Supper, is left to be discretionally administred; no form or posture of administration being appointed — unless, we make the posture of our Lord, and of his apostles essential, as an authoritative precedent; and then, I question, whether
whether any part of the christian church has the essentiais of that ordinance. For it is generally agreed to have been instituted in a reclining posture; our Lord and his disciples leaning upon each other. But—why men should take the liberty of differing from our Lord in the method and form of celebrating one positive rite, without making any the least difficulty of it; and yet make the circumstances of the other to give the very essence of the rite, is very unaccountable.—It cannot be pretended, that baptism is a more solemn ordinance than the supper;—most, if not all christians have agreed to carry the Eucharist rather beyond *, than to leave it so much upon a level with baptism. Of those who are the most earnest and solicitous to make important the modes of baptism, some of them have taken great liberties in their celebration of the Eucharist.—And as to the posture; none of them, I believe, make a conscience of reclining on squabbs or beds when receiving the elements.

Besides, it is remarkable in the institution of the Eucharist, that the quantity either of bread or wine is not specified; what reason then have we to imagine that the quantity of water applied in baptism, shou'd be determin'd as of importance, [when not one word

* With what reason I do not here enquire.
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Word has been said about it in all the sacred writings,] any more than that the quantity of bread and wine, should be discretionally left to communicants?

But if after all, it should be granted, that possibly the apostles baptized by immersion; since this is not any where, either by express account, or by indubitable consequence, the voice of revelation, that they did; much less, since there is not any stress at all laid upon it, it appears no way incumbent on us, who live in a different climate, and cloth after a different manner, that we should practise immersion.—It cannot become our duty, unless it was a matter of clear revelation. For nothing can demand our conformity to it, as the appointment, or as the will of Christ, but what the revelation makes plain to be so.

It will therefore be greatly injurious to the credit, and dignity of the revelation should we suppose that the mode must be necessary and essential to baptism; even so essential as that the validity of it is destroyed by the want of plunging.—Had this been the case, and that any important consequences depended upon it, it would express great defect either of wisdom or faithfulness, or of both, not only in the apostles, but in our Lord himself.—On the contrary, it is
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is certain, that there is no one place, which has laid any weight upon it; nay, so far from any thing being built upon it, it has no plain and evident foundation in all the Holy Scriptures. And in cool thought and reflection, such persons must see great reason for abating their zeal, who have ventured to make the want of baptism itself in any form a damnable sin: forasmuch as such exceed the sentence pronounced by the Son of God, Mark xvi. 16. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. Not a syllable of the want of baptism, as the reason of damnation.—And wisely has our Lord left out the baptismal rite in the denunciation; yea, and very friendly too, to great numbers of professors among plunging Baptists, who have died out of this world, believers in Christ, and yet have remained unbaptized. For, I doubt not, but many thousands have received Christ, and his words, who have never been able to discern the importance of water-baptism; persons, who have been taught superstitiously, to apply ideas to it, which in the nature of things, never did, never can belong to it.

It is yet a thing unprov’d, that the apostles of our Lord were ever batized with any baptism, except that of John. Tho’ it is probable, that several of them had received
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ceived that; of some, it is manifest—that they had been John's disciples, John i. 37. Of Matthew indeed we have no traces, that I can find, of his having been a disciple of John's. Our Lord called him, when fitting at the receipt of custom, Mark ix. 9. And in chap. x. 3. we find him numbered among the twelve apostles, without any intervening account of his baptism, or any intimations of his having been a disciple of the Baptist. Moreover, it is never said that our Lord baptized any with water, unless John iii. 12. should be so understood. But when we compare chap. iv. 2. we find no way of reconciling these places, but by understanding the former passage, either of our Lord's baptizing with the Spirit, or of his continuing with his disciples in Judea, whilst they baptized with water.—

It was perhaps sufficient, and answered all the ends of baptism, that the apostles of our Lord constantly attended him, and openly professed their adherence to him. As this had the moral design of baptism contained in it.—

Besides, baptism is not essential to mens being disciples of Jesus, for we have instances upon record of men being believers in Christ, and receiving the gifts of the Spirit, to whom christian baptism had never been applied, Acts x. 44.—But who dare
On Plunging in Baptism. 33

dare be so presumptuous, as to say, that had these died before the baptismal water had been applied, they would have been damned? — or that the baptismal water would have secured their salvation?

The rite, if understood rightly, does not purify the subject with regard to God or Jesus; but is primarily designed to affect and influence others. In the early ages, it was (applied to adult persons) to be a public and open acknowledgment of men believing the gospel.—

Upon the whole, How dangerous a part do those persons act, who upon such unwarranted foundations make plunging essential to baptism: and not only so, but make baptism by plunging essential to salvation! — It is very dangerous to narrow or enlarge the foundation laid by Christ. The apostles themselves never had authority to do it; they durst not preach up any thing as essential, that Christ had not declared to be so. Nor do I know of any one principle of faith that is fundamental, or requisite to denominate a man a christian, more than that, of believing that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, or that he is the sent of God. 1 John iv. 2. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God.

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Nor of any thing that is fundamental in practice, in order to salvation, but that of forming the temper and conduct by the doctrine and example of our Lord. — _If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them_, John xiii. 17.

These may be built upon, as fundamentals, though men differ about rites; their modes and forms of being administered; especially, when no explicite rule or canon is delivered about them.

He is to all intents and purposes a christian, and entitled to salvation, who wanders not from the rule; who makes nothing binding, that the gospel has not made binding, and nothing loosing which the gospel has not made loosing. Though he should imagine plunging preferable to pouring; or pouring preferable to plunging.——

But whoever, in either case, is so bigoted, as to make his mode essential, has thereby deviated from the gospel rule; has brought in offences; has introduced uncharitableness; and lies exposed hereupon to a terrible anathema! forasmuch, as he cannot be a true christian, who spits and destroys the Spirit of the religion of Jesus; which is charity. And he may be assured, that that principle
principle or practice in and about which good men may and do differ, cannot possibly enter into the essence of truth or piety.

But, by the law of charity, we may judge there are fifty to one among us of good men, who have not thought plunging at all requisite or essential to baptism; ergo,

F I N I S.