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ARTICLE I.

## OUR CHURCH POLICY—SHALL IT BE PROGRESS OR PETRIFICATION?

ARE THERE TO BE NO CHANGES?

Of the five grand divisions of revealed truth—Theology, Anthropology, Soteriology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology—it is well known that the faith of the Church as to the first three has been definitely settled. As to the latter two, it is different. Questions of eschatology have furnished the basis for the wildest vagaries and speculations: while in church polity the deviations from the scriptural standard were early and are radical.

The mind of the Church is not yet determined even as to the fundamental questions of ecclesiology; for we have the monarchic, aristocratic, republican, and democratic policies, all maintained and practised to-day. Within the limits of these radical theories there are variant and discordant opinions. This is seen in our republican Presbyterianism. The mother Church of Scotland has never had but one theology; she has had, however, two books of discipline. In this country we adopted neither of the Scotch formularies, but took the English Westminster, and modified it. Under this we had repeated, prolonged, and bitter controversies. We have revised, developed, pruned, and greatly improved it in our present Book of Church Order. But

make the discrimination betwixt "wife" and "woman." The honored name, "*Isha*," means primarily "wife," and a wife must be a woman. Again, the summary throwing overboard of ancient versions and modern commentators is like the position of an eminent Baptist debater, who asserted that βαπτίζω meant "to immerse," and *nothing else*; naively adding, "although *all* the lexicographers disagree with me!" Again, the enlargement of the word "sister" to "national sister" is self-destroying. It would imply that polygamy might be allowed if the man took one Hebrew and one Canaanitish woman!

The final stand on the 16th verse is undoubtedly the only possible stand; and all of Dr. Stoddert's argument proceeds upon the faulty statement of the correlation. The present writer is doubly unfortunate, in having to "cavil" at *any* proposition from so able an ally. But common fairness in debate seemed to demand this modest *caveat*.



#### ARTICLE V.

### REMISSION OF SINS IN IMMERSION, AND THE BOOK OF THE ACTS.

That phase of faith which general use identifies in name with Alexander Campbell, but which in its own communion is associated with the official title of the Founder of Christianity, has become a conspicuous fact in America. It is moulding public opinion by an attractive literature, an able press, and by an army of trained disputants; and its actual if not relative growth is perhaps more rapid now than at any previous period. There are many things about this great body which must elicit the admiration even of those who dissent most thoroughly from the doctrines generally taught in it. It is well that multitudes have been influenced to range themselves under the banner of Christ, as has been the case. There is frequently to be found a

type of Christian character as lovely as earth can exhibit, a large-hearted catholicity, unfortunately made more conspicuous by its shining contrast with a narrowness of sectarianism which is far more common. It is impossible to accord too much praise to the educational zeal that is manifested. Better still, there is an especial gift, shared to the same extent by no other body of Protestants, of uniting the different classes of society. With them we constantly see "the rich and the poor meet together." For their bold witness against that odious and misleading terminology, of which "getting religion" and "getting through" may be cited as examples, they deserve the thanks of Christendom. Most of all, they are often diligent students of the Bible. If this searching of the Scriptures is too often perverted into a mere looking for clubs for controversy, and if to the other pleasant things we have named there are reverses, we can still rejoice that there is so much good, and that so many of the fruits of the Spirit are produced.

The student of Church history who knew that like causes produce like effects, could have predicted before Mr. Campbell left the Presbyterian Church in 1812, that a revival of Pelagianism was at hand. The eighteenth century, the age of the infidels, had culminated in the French Revolution. The teaching that the world could never be happy till Atheism should be universal, and that morality to be practical must be founded on self-love and interest, bore its legitimate fruit in that carnival of crime, when, as Macaulay says, the gutters of the streets of Paris ran to the Seine foaming with the best and noblest blood of France, when populous cities were turned to deserts, when no mercy was shown to age or sex, when babies torn from the breast were tossed from pike to pike along the Jacobin ranks, when a few short months had sufficed to degrade France below the level of New Zealand. In spite of the deductions of sensational philosophy, it was branded on the heart of humanity that there was a God. A great religious excitement, which in its intensity was like that which followed the preaching of Peter the Hermit, and in its extent was as wide as Christendom, attested how thoroughly the nations had learned the awful lesson. In America especially, there was what

is yet known as "the Great Revival"—a movement signalled by the exhibition of phenomena which to this day are inexplicable alike to the physiologist and the theologian. Bodily exercises of the wildest and most amazing nature were prevalent, and these in many cases occurred against the volition of those affected. Ignorant and fanatical men stirred the emotional nature still more deeply, and often lashed excitement into frenzy, by congregational exhibitions, and a variety of measures, most appropriately called machinery. The effect on American Christianity still survives. The settled tendency of the preachers and hearers alike, to look for spiritual influences in the so-called revivals, the constant effort to get up excitements, and to confound these with the workings of Him who is not the author of confusion, are the present reminders of former days, the legacy bequeathed to the middle and end of the century by its early years. If the system, modified as it has been by time, is felt to be abhorrent to good taste, common sense, and the word of God, we can easily understand how, at an earlier period, it must have repelled and disgusted multitudes. The house was swept and garnished for the new "Reformation;" and although this movement did not begin in the West, it found there its most congenial home, and flourishes to-day chiefly in the ground burnt over by the old revival. The natural result of the implied teaching that saving faith is a shock of celestial electricity, conducted to the patient by the groanings and outcries of those around, and exhibiting its presence by hysterical jerks and wild shouts, was the prevalence of the belief that saving faith was an intellectual assent, exhibiting itself by saying that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The reaction from the idea that the Holy Spirit like Baal was to be summoned by jumping up and down, and shrieking to the skies and working a congregation up to maddening excitement, was the idea that the Spirit wrote the Bible, and that in writing it, "all his power which can operate upon the human mind is spent," that "all his converting power is exhibited in the divine record."<sup>1</sup> The natural consequence of insisting on an "experience" stretching through days and weeks or years, was the belief that there was

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<sup>1</sup>Christianity Restored, pages 350, 351.

no experience at all. So the movement began. So it keeps on. Its strength to-day is in the unscriptural methods of the churches. In the inevitable reaction which pervades a community burnt over by a religious excitement inaugurated and kept up by any means except the simple preaching of Christ, the "Disciples" make their entrance. When their cause appears to be languishing, a brush-fire frenzy in a neighboring church will make them flourish as the green bay-tree. The "mourners" who did not "get through," and those who, "powerfully converted," doubt the reality of the process through which they have passed, are alike ready to lend a listening ear to the pleasing information that their failure was due to their superior intelligence, which could not be imposed on by the teachers of a spurious Christianity. To these are joined the many who, standing aloof, note what is going on.

The Calvinistic system is chiefly abused in practice by those who reject it theoretically. Sometimes in Presbyterian churches, more frequently in those of other denominations, we have seen "mourners" crowded around the altar in all the mental anguish into which they can be stimulated, and have heard the assurance that this purely physical result was the "convicting" power of the Spirit. Converting power is waited for as men becalmed expect a wind. "Professions" generally occur in the moment that intense waves of excitement pass over the congregation, but most rarely during the dinner hour. We knew once of a most successful "work of grace" conducted in the hottest of weather, in which the presiding minister strictly forbade the fanning of the penitents, as he thought they "got through" better when very warm. While we hold that the revival which is produced by a present Spirit, through the preaching of Christ, is the glory of the Church, with all our ministerial experience we cannot be in one of these scenes of confusion without for a little season doubting the truth of Christianity, of our own participation in its benefits, and of everything else, except the odiousness of the scene itself.

While we are in full sympathy with our "Christian" brethren in opposition to physical and sympathetic religious excitements, we are forced to inquire whether that especial reaction in

belief and practice with which they are identified is reasonable, scriptural, or safe. Belief in the actual remission of sins in the act of immersion may be called the key of their ecclesiastical position, the one rallying point around which they all gather. In the intense development of individualism which their system tends to produce, the varieties of belief are as

"Thick as the autumnal leaves that strew the brooks  
In Vallambrosa."

And it is impossible to point to any controverted doctrine about which there is not a practically boundless diversity of opinion. But there is one banner which all bear aloft, one trumpet which peals no uncertain note, one cry in which all the herd join, which is "baptism for remission of sins." If God actually grants pardon in the act of immersion, this is the greatest fact on earth. If he does not, the most dangerous of possible mistakes is to look for salvation where God has not told us to look.

It is a startling fact that this doctrine, vaunted as new, is simply a reversion to Romanism. That apostasy has as its foundation stone the teaching that all sins, actual and original, are washed away in baptism. In one case as in the other, any private Christian may perform the rite, without which the soul might die unforgiven. In one as in the other, there is the gathering on the Sabbath, with chief reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The Greeks, the Armenians, and well-nigh every other form of apostate Christianity, believe in the actual remission of sins in baptism. One of Mr. Campbell's early disciples forsook him and carried the doctrine to the Mormon herd of swine, who still glory in it. Instead of this being a belief lost by the Church at large and restored by the "Reformers," there is hardly an apostate Church in eighteen centuries which has not held it. All this proves nothing except that there is no novelty about this doctrine, and that in the past it has been linked with every form of false Christianity.

A chief source of mischief in this controversy, has been the ignorant and prejudiced misrepresentations of the belief in question. These are not simply a tacit admission that the real arguments which support it are too strong to be faced, but are intrinsically

dishonest. It is not true, as often alleged, that the "Campbellites" made a saviour of water. They insist that unless there is a change of heart exhibiting itself in faith and repentance, a thousand baptisms would be of no avail. Where these graces exist, God has taught men to expect his gracious pardon in this, the first act of obedience.

Proceeding to give the usual proof relied on to establish this conclusion, to many points of which proof we profoundly object, it is said there is a grandeur of beauty and simplicity in this ordering which brings it into correspondence with human need. When a child has rebelled against an earthly father, the parent always requires some external act, as a token of submission. The thing itself may be small, but the child is in a state of rebellion till he does it, and cannot be restored until he has shown by this performance that he has come back to his right mind. There is nothing in water. God might have directed the speaking of a word, the movement of a limb, a hundred different things, none of them would be of avail in themselves, and water is of no avail in itself. The obedience to a direct command, is alone of value; and in this first act, God and man alike extend pardon to the rebel.

The book of The Acts especially reveals the "conditions" on which God gives remission of sins. While incidental expressions elsewhere throw light on the subject, the Gospels describe events before the introduction of the new order, and the Epistles are to believers, but this book has for its chief object to show how the lost is found, how the rebel becomes a child. The New Kingdom was opened on Pentecost. Heaven had been preparing earth for that day from the hour that Adam left Paradise. Prophets had seen its glories in the distant future. It was the inauguration day of the Lord Jesus as king of men. As those before had gazed forwards towards it in rapt expectancy, so to the end of time, the Church must look back to it with reverential study. A number of sinners, guilty of the blackest crime of earth, asked the great question which the Lord had commissioned the apostles to answer. The question was, "What shall we do?" The reply was "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins." It is alleged

that this direction settled the point for the ages, and that the words uttered in this crisis of human history, show that it is God's will to pardon in the first act of obedience.

While this command is the key of the position, it is strengthened by other histories. The blasphemer and persecutor who was stricken down, and who asked the Lord what he would have him do, was told to go into the city and it should be told him. He went in, and was directed to arise and be baptized and wash away his sins. Another narrative tells of Cornelius, devout, fearing God, giving alms, praying always, but with all these shining graces not accepted, for he was told to send for Peter who would tell him how he and his house could be saved, which showed he was unpardoned up to that time.

It is alleged, and in our opinion conclusively proved by Mr. Campbell and other scholars, that when, in the original, baptize is connected with *in* it necessarily involves a change of place or condition, and if so, it is inferred that to be baptized into remission, teaches that God pardons in that ordinance.

Furthermore, it is believed that the exact confession is recorded which every candidate for baptism must make—a confession of that grand central truth proclaimed by angels, apostles, martyrs, and to which the Church is to bear eternal witness that “Jesus Christ is the Son of God.” It is taught that he who says this from the heart, has all the preparation needed for receiving that rite in which pardon is accorded.

The “brethren” hold that the “sects” have utterly perverted the teachings about the Spirit. That divine Person is not given to outside sinners, for Christ expressly says the world could not receive him. As Peter makes the promise that after baptism He should be imparted, this teaches that baptized Christians only enjoy these influences. Whichever side has lost the truth about this tremendous point, must be fundamentally wrong, and needs indeed to be restored to Christianity.

It is said that some years ago in Kentucky, there was a public discussion between a “Christian” brother, and another minister. Before an immense audience, the former said that his opponent would not tell sinners, who asked what they must do to be saved



what the apostles told them. The minister interrupting him, indignantly denied the charge, and was met by the question, "If a man was to ask you how to be pardoned, would you tell him to be baptized for remission of sins or to be baptized and wash away his sins?" We believe there was no reply.

We are far from endorsing many points in these statements, and have merely desired to present them as we have often heard them. As the book of The Acts is appealed to, we cheerfully agree to let the question be decided according to its teachings, and especially those of the second chapter. Vast import must be attached to the words with which the gospel was introduced to man, and such language interpreted according to its natural meaning, as understood by those who heard it, must be accepted as final. The idea which those received from it can be conceived only by picturing to the mind a society which has no counterpart on earth.

When God began to set up his Church more formally amongst men, the first step was to isolate the selected individuals from national, social, and family connexions. A Syrian was directed to travel towards the setting sun. The pilgrim began his journey but halted on the way, and half of a century elapsed before he stood in the promised land. Here for three generations the family remained without local or social ties, when they were called into another country where they were to abide for centuries. At the end of this period a code of laws was given, which, just as they were obeyed, kept them distinct from all other nations. The policy of separation was likewise furthered by limiting for two centuries the call to one individual, who thus apart, not simply from the world but from his own brethren, must have profoundly felt his own isolation. The growing effect of this influence can be seen in Esau's marriage with a Canaanite, and in Esau's nephews slaying the Canaanites for striving to marry their sister. It was not till this isolation had been partially effected, as it was in the fourth generation, that the expansion was permitted. It would be long to tell through what moral and social code; through what wars, subjugations, and exiles; through what burning words of prophets and splendid deeds of kings; through

what recital of deliverances in the past and promises of manifestation yet more glorious in the future, the slow training went on until the race was thoroughly separated from ordinary humanity. To the result intended by God, human corruption added other elements. While they rightly regarded themselves as God's peculiar people, they wrongly looked on others as dogs, as vile, as unclean, as not to be touched without contracting pollution. They considered that their pure Jewish blood gave them a claim to the favor of heaven, and that each new act of obedience increased the debt. The young ruler who, as he thought, had kept the law from his youth up, and the Pharisee who thanked God he was not as other men, were types of the nation. It was, we believe, Rabbi Ben Simeon who said that "there are not upon the earth twenty-four such men as our father Abraham; but if there were, I and my son would be of that twenty-four. If there were but twelve, I and my son would be of that twelve. If there were but six, I and my son would be of that six. If there were but two, I and my son would be those two. If there were but one, I should be that one."

There was yet another element which helped to keep the race apart from all others. A splendid series of promises gathering through the ages had taught them that the grand events which had marked their early history were but preparations for a grander deliverance, when a glorious King should descend from the skies to rule over them, to subdue their enemies, and to set up a world-wide empire. As their national pride was humbled, they looked forward with more burning anxiety and intensity of longing to him whom they expected to scatter their foes and to rebuild their desolations. There was no Sabbath worship which did not refer to him, no synagogue or temple-service which did not kindle their zeal afresh, no deep study of the Scripture which did not have for its object to hasten the day of that coming, no event in their lives which was not in some way connected with that expectation. If they heaped rite on rite, if they added burden to burden, if they multiplied the restrictions touching the Sabbath, they were stimulated by the pitiable delusion, that if the whole nation should be righteous for but one day, the Messiah

could descend. This intensity of belief and desire, although in an obscure province and among a hated people, had impressed itself on the empire. The chief of Roman poets, in an immortal eclogue, delighted the court of Augustus by an exquisite adaptation of the Jewish hope, which he adroitly used to flatter at once the imperial family, and the yet more imperial people who had elevated that family to supreme power.

But it would be a great mistake to suppose that all the God-given revelation and God-appointed worship were allowed simply to minister to Pharisaic pride, to Sadducean mockery, or to dreams of political supremacy. Paul announces that the gospel was preached to Abraham. The host in the desert drank of the spiritual rock, which was Christ; and they also had the gospel preached to them. The Old Testament Scriptures are declared by the New, able to make men wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ. If Israel was a peculiar treasure and people unto the Lord, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation; if the Lord called it by name and said he was its Saviour, and if all this was true in an earlier and darker day, we must believe that the fuller teachings about the coming of Christ produced later fruits of holiness. Zacharias and Elisabeth, Mary and Joseph, Simeon and Anna, Nathanael and the hosts of others, who joyfully welcomed Christ, showed that there was more than a remnant in the land who followed the faith of the national heroes. A larger proportion of the Jews in foreign countries, removed from the formalism prevalent in Jerusalem, would naturally serve God with more holiness. And as the Israelites impressed on all their own belief of a coming Saviour, the instances of faith recorded among the Gentiles are not extraordinary.

It is evident that there were holy Jews, and that when these accepted the gospel, they accepted no new doctrine, they subtracted nothing from their old faith, they added nothing to it. They merely understood that the expected Messiah had come and that Jesus was he. That wide divergence between the law and the gospel which eventually emerged, was of slow growth. It was nearly twenty years after Christ had arisen that "the brother of the Lord" taught that there was no relaxation of the Mosaic law

for the Jew. It was after Saul of Tarsus had been preaching the gospel for the fourth part of a century and after he had written those magnificent expositions of the relations between the two covenants found in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, that, as Farrar expresses it, he consented to live with four paupers in the chambers of the temple; to pay for sixteen sacrifices and meat offerings; to stand with these, while the priest offered four he-lambs of the first year for burnt-offerings and four ewe-lambs for sin offerings, and four rams for peace offerings; and to look on while the priests took four sodden shoulders of rams and four unleavened cakes out of the four baskets, and four unleavened wafers, anointed with oil for a peace offering. It was only five years earlier, after he had been ridiculed at Corinth, rejected in Pisidia, and left for dead in Lystra, because of the hatred he inspired among the Jews, that he took on himself the vow of the Nazarite, that he allowed his hair to grow, and when the time had expired, cut off his locks and carefully preserved them until he went to Jerusalem, for the purpose of having them burnt in the temple under the sacrifice of the peace offerings. If he who represented the revolt against legalism recognised to the latest period of his life the temple service and worship, it is not strange that the original twelve had neither the ability nor desire to lower the claims of the law for the sons of Abraham. Lange (on Acts 2d) covers the whole ground when he says :

“The primitive Christians did not even remotely entertain the thought of founding a sect, or organising a religious communion that should essentially differ from that of the old covenant, and withdraw them from the latter. On the contrary, they participated with as much zeal as any others in the services of the temple.”

This learned and impartial statement is sustained by well-nigh every page in the New Testament which everywhere shows that the day of the gospel, after its first breaking, by slow degrees only substituted its fuller blaze for the symbols of Judaism.

One of the great objects of the Book of Acts is to describe the manner in which God's people scattered in various folds, were gathered under one banner, as they had been already nominally or really under one Shepherd. Seven histories, each represent-

ing a different class, are given, in an order corresponding to the general plan of beginning with that class which was highest in legal or actual righteousness, and ending with that esteemed lowest. These seven histories all describe the manner of the transfer of God's professed and faithful servants into the New Kingdom. After this we have the gospel preached to the outside sinner. And two more examples, ten in all, show the relation between the Church of Christ and the disciples of John. With these the circle is completed and the narrative closes. If in such a number of instances, we shall not be able to attain absolute certainty respecting the greatest of all questions,—how can man find pardon—revelation is vain, examples and teachings are naught.

1. There was an especial fitness in the arrangement that the gospel should first meet what the old covenant produce that was highest in legal or best in actual righteousness. The place was in the holy city, the dwelling of God. The day was the first of the week, the opening of a great solemnity. It was kept as a Sabbath. It was believed to be the anniversary of the giving of the law at Sinai. It was the feast of the finished harvest. Burnt offerings, sin offerings, and peace offerings, had been appointed in token of pardon and sacramental union, and then what the Lord had called a sweet savor had been multiplied until they outnumbered the half hours of the light. On such occasions as these Jerusalem almost forgot that she was a captive. Everything combined to add to her glory. The city had begun to be the seat of splendor and of empire, at a period not far distant from those wanderings of Æneas, which centuries later were to result in the founding of Rome. It was there that David had been strong and Solomon had been magnificent, that hero had brought the spoils of nations and prophet had uttered deep sayings. Above all, it was the place which Jehovah had selected for his earthly abode. Here, for nearly a thousand years, with but one brief interruption, he had been worshipped with rites which were of hoary antiquity before the city had been built, and which he had appointed for a cause, which, ages older than themselves, was to endure till moons should wax and wane no more. The streets were thronged with visitors whose far off homes were amid the

ruins of dead empires or in the capital of the great living one, who shivered in the snows of the north or were burnt by the sun of the tropics, who lived among half-tamed savages, in the wildness of nature, or were familiar with scenes made immortal by prowess of hero, pen of historian, or tongue of poet. Hope long deferred had not made the heart sick, for at any moment they thought the Christ long-desired might appear, and the glories would be revealed, which were to dim the splendors of the past. It was felt that God was still with his people; and so he was, in a way they did not regard. If that guilty city in her Pharisaic bigotry and Sadducean mockery had rejected her King, there was a faithful remnant even in Judea, and there were multitudes from other lands, to whom the gospel, preached by anticipation, had not been preached in vain. Many holy men were in Jerusalem that day. The presence of numbers of these doubtless represented the anxious thought and painful preparation of years. They had prayed all their lives with their faces towards the city, and had longed to engage in the solemn services of the temple. With the sons of Jacob were others, who, born pagans, had given up their own faith and people to serve the God of Israel, and had now come long journeys over sea and land to worship him in the outer court beyond which they were not to advance.

Chrysostom said that the presence of these visitors in Jerusalem was a sign of their piety. The Spirit has, however, not left us to inference respecting their character. They were, as a class, holy men, as the word with which they are introduced teaches. That word unhappily translated "devout" implies pious reverence. Its usage can be understood from a few examples. The Old Testament closes with a promise that the Lord kept a book of remembrance for them that "thought on his name." Solomon tells how the Lord preserves the way of "his saints," and how the word is a shield to them that "put their trust in him," and that he is happy that "feareth alway," while Nahum says he knows those that "trust" in him. In the New Testament we are told of Simeon who was just and "devout." In Hebrews, Noah, the first person of the race to whom the term righteous is applied, "moved with pious foresight," prepared the ark. Let us serve God acceptably

with "godly fear." Christ in the days of his flesh was heard for his "godly fear." The words in quotation are translations from the same root, and then what a high religious character is affirmed by the original. So the early Fathers of its synonym: "Piety" is an action which follows God (Clemens, A.). It is "piety" when one looks to the one and only God, and orders his life according to him (Eusebius). "Piety" is the mother of all the virtues, the beginning and the end of all virtues (Gregory, N.). In his work on the synonyms of the New Testament (Leipsic, 1829,) A. Tittman compares this with the word applied to Cornelius, and says "Εὐλαβής (used in Acts ii.), is a pious man who is ruled by a knowledge of the divine holiness, and fears lest he should feel (*sentiat*) anything against the divine will; εἰσεβής is he who shows this piety in his acts. Hence the first "is piety which rules the soul itself. The other is the strength in the life itself." In other words, the gospel was first proclaimed to those who had the highest actual righteousness as well as to those who had the highest ceremonial righteousness of the law.

While in the Sabbath stillness of the morning the crowds were going towards the temple, there was heard that awful note which strikes the ear when many waters roar, when great hosts tread, when a mighty wind rushes. The sound seemed to "strike" at a certain point, which was the room where the disciples were assembled. It is probable that these in a divine ecstacy left the house and went into an open place, and gave utterance to lofty ascriptions of praise, exalted strains of worship, the revelations of heavenly vision, the utterances of unseen wonders. As the holy strangers came to the place, each one heard the accents of his childhood, the tones that took him across weary wastes of desert and of sea, of years and of changes, back to the scenes of early days. Thus each had a token that the miracle was for him. Not only was the tongue familiar, but those who were themselves true servants found a chord in their own souls answering to the wonderful things of God which were spoken. The mob looked on the whole as a drunken exhibition. Charges to this effect soon calmed the disciples and excited an indignant protest from Peter. Seeing the mixed character of the crowd, he called both

inhabitants and visitors to witness that this was a fulfilment of prophecy. Then speaking to the citizens only, he reminded them how Jesus had done divine works among them, how they had put him to death, and told them that this they were seeing was the proof that he was the Messiah.

Those who felt themselves guilty were filled with horror. They had been called *brethren*, an acknowledgment that they belonged to the same cause as the speaker, and they used the same form of address, asking what they must do.

They were told to repent. It is clear this command could have reference only to the especial sin committed and to those who had committed it, and that it was not addressed to the large number present who were now in dumb amazement, hearing about these things for the first time. We have always regarded that as a queer old lady who had great self-abasements and internal anguish and sore repentings because of Adam's sin, and we cannot think that this extraordinary exercise of repenting for other people's doings was the first thing commanded in the new dispensation. That word was to the murderers of Christ.

To the outsiders, and embracing all present, it was commanded to be baptized for, or unto, remission of sins. The words, "repent" and "be baptized," are of different numbers and persons, and this indicates that they were addressed to different classes, if the connexion so suggests, as it does in the present case. The latter command means whatever those who heard it naturally supposed it to mean.

The Jews for fifteen centuries had been familiar with the expression, and there was probably not a man present who did not at once understand it. There was hardly a service at the temple, or a religious act at home, of which the direction was not the repetition. Although they believed they were the beloved, accepted children of God, they were continually falling into visible separation from the congregation, to which they were to be visibly restored through some visible rite or ceremony. If they touched defiled garments, if in the street they had unconsciously come in contact with one himself defiled, if the water that was poured on their hands was unclean, if they handled a dead body, if they



mourned for a near relative, they lapsed into ceremonial defilement, and were to get back into their lost position, not through a divine act, but through a divinely appointed human ceremony. When they baptized themselves after their return from the market; when they baptized their household and kitchen furniture; when they washed their persons and their clothes after touching a dead body, when they performed the endless actions prescribed for legal purification, they understood it was their visible position, not their actual acceptance with God, which was changed through the ordinance. It was not simply that their ritual did not bring an outside sinner into a state of pardon; it would have been death for an outside sinner to have participated in it. The crowds who heard Peter, each one of whom was, or believed himself to be, the beloved servant of God, must have understood that by the bodily act commanded, they were not, for the first time, to be received as sinners, but were to be brought into a new visible condition.

Mr. Campbell has conclusively established the fact, now widely accepted alike by scholars and theologians, that "to baptize into" always involves a change of condition. The expression occurs some twelve times in the Bible, and always with this idea of a change of position of the recipient. John baptized into repentance, transferred into a state of visible profession. To be baptized into the Trinity, into John's baptism, into Paul, into Christ, into his death, into one body, into Moses, in each instance necessarily involves a change in the individual himself, not in another being. As in all the other cases, "baptism into remission" is not a change in the heart of God, but in the position of him who receives it; and not a man who heard Peter could for a moment have had any other idea than that so familiar to him, that, already an accepted servant of God, he was to be transferred into a new condition, not by divine pardon, but by the visible act.

Of all monstrous dreams that ever disported before human fancy, there was never a wilder one, than the notion that in this phrase of four words, the apostle announced to the most churchly of all communities on which the sun ever shone—the community which up to that moment was God's only visible Church on earth

and had been this for two millenniums—that they were outside sinners, on a footing with the Gentile dogs whom they would in a moment have rent asunder if they had dared to enter the court of the Jews in the temple; that the wrath of God was on them and that their sins had never been pardoned. To believe this fantasy is to believe that with one fell blow Peter overturned Moses, the prophets, the synagogues, the temple ritual, the prayers, the sacrifices, the services of nearly two thousand years. It is to believe that the apostle announced that the God-given system which in its every detail preached the gospel, and of which Christ did not destroy a jot or a tittle, because it testified of him, left its votaries on the same footing as those who had never heard of Jehovah.

The amazing thing about this most stupendous of revolutions is, that if it occurred, it began without objection and advanced without notice. Christ said he came to fulfil the law, but because he seemed slack in some respects, the Jews rejected him. He told them that their fathers, to whom God had spoken, were themselves called gods, and that they, the sons, were the children of the kingdom; but because he taught that Gentiles also might be accepted and Jews rejected, they slew him. Seven weeks later, it is dreamed, they learn without a murmur that their fancied advantages are a myth; that their belief in their own acceptance with God which, up to that moment, had been their ruling principle, is a delusion; that they are outside sinners, on a level with the Gentiles. This is supposed to be the constant preaching of the apostles to a people so jealous of their religious privileges, and their position as God's people, that fifteen years later, Peter withdrew from Gentile converts for fear of Christian Jews, and nearly fifteen years after that Paul was hardly rescued from death, because it was rumored he had introduced outsiders into the temple. That apostle signed his own death warrant, when he told the mob he had been sent to the Gentiles. Such was the madness of religious zeal and exclusiveness. Yet we are asked to believe that, in a record of thirty years, they utter no remonstrance, although they are always told that they are on an equality of condemnation with the worship-

pers of Jupiter and Juno. In fact, this neglect of all changes instituted in these four words is never heard of any more either from friend or foe. He who thoughtfully puts himself in the midst of that religious life which seethed in Jerusalem when the gospel was first preached, and who can believe that Peter taught his hearers, many of whom were holy men, and all of whom were God's professed servants, that up to that moment they were unpardoned sinners, has a faith that can remove the Himalayas.

If any of those received on the day of Pentecost were already faithful servants of God, they had been previously looking to the coming Christ, and had through him been pardoned before they came to Jerusalem. All present believed themselves already accepted, and none could have understood that then, for the first time, they were to be made true servants. Nothing was more familiar to them than changing their ceremonial condition through a bodily rite; nothing stranger than the idea, that in such rite an outsider became a child. Whenever the phrase "baptize into" occurs, it implies a change of position, not of John, or Moses, or Paul, but of the person baptized; and here as elsewhere it does not teach a change in the heart of God, but in the visible external condition of the subject. These four points are independent, conclusive, and unassailable, and each one alone is ruinous to the theory that Peter taught that actual forgiveness is accorded in baptism. We picture to ourselves the frenzy of wrath with which this most bigoted of communities would have learned that they were regarded as unpardoned sinners. And when there was no protest, no objection, no opposition, we know of a surety there was no such teaching.

2. The Samaritans were a people, so to speak, embedded in the very heart of Judaism, and were the rabid votaries of a rival faith. As the Jews loved Mt. Zion, so these loved Mt. Gerizim. The multiplex widow of the well began to enter into controversy with Christ himself as to the merits of their respective faiths. The Samaritans, although corrupt and darkened, still worshipped the God of Moses, were looking for a Messiah, and were in no wise on the footing of the Gentiles. The gospel was preached to them by Philip, but before this many of them may have been

truly accepted. In a darker time, there had been seven thousand faithful; and that very man, whose kindness to the wounded stranger has been the example to the Church for all ages, may have been one of those baptized. However this may be, the people were professed servants of God, and as such they believed themselves accepted by him. About this, there can be no dispute.

3. We read next of a proselyte of the gate. The treasurer of Queen Candace, high in position and authority, in his heathen home, had become a servant of Jehovah, and showed his zeal by making a long journey to worship in his temple, where his humble place was in the outside circle. Returning home, he was reading the Scriptures aloud, either in the exercise of the devotional spirit which had taken him to Jerusalem, or as some suppose to instruct the driver. It is not hard to see why this good man, leaving the country perhaps to return no more, was, so to speak, caught on the way and instructed. There is an especial reason why the history is recorded. The eldest son of Noah had been called to the gospel, and now the second one is welcomed. The descendants of the third are introduced later. This worthy African, in hair, color, and features, was no doubt in full correspondence with his brethren who are now with us. (See *Lange in loco.*) He was joined by Philip, who, although the Civil Rights Bill had not been passed, sat with him in the chariot and began to teach him. While this was proceeding, the disciple saw water. Exclaiming, "What doth hinder me to be baptized?" he stopped the vehicle and descended without waiting for Philip's consent. Without a recorded word on either side, the rite was performed.

There is a volume of teaching in the fact that the man did not think it necessary to ask permission to be baptized. A Jewish worshipper already, looking for Christ, he had only to accept Jesus and receive the badge of discipleship. There is no more correspondence between the confession required of this faithful servant and that which an outside sinner should give, than there is between the transfer of a member from one church to another and the experience of a converted Turk.

When the baptism was over, Philip was miraculously snatched

away, and the Christian went on his journey rejoicing. This joy is cited as a proof that he had learned that his sins had been remitted in the ordinance. It is also possible that he was rejoicing in the doctrine of the immaculate conception revealed to him, or in the truth touching the use of leavened bread as between the Eastern and Western churches. But it is much more probable that when a man has accepted an all-important teaching on insufficient evidence, and enjoys a miraculous confirmation of his faith, that his rejoicing is for this assurance.

It is understood by scholars that the 37th verse is a bungling forgery, a mere human addition inserted to supply a fancied omission. It is hard to say whether the man who thus aimed to improve the narrative as given by the Spirit, would have laughed or wept, if he had known that the trap he set about the fourth century would entangle a large section of the Church in the nineteenth, and that his bungling emendation would be repeated on the other side of the world by hundreds of thousands, who would imagine that by so doing they were restoring apostolic usage and rebuking a degenerate Christianity. A grimmer joke was never perpetrated.

4. Up to the hour when he was smitten down in the way, the history of Saul of Tarsus was that of a self-righteous Pharisee. As soon as he learned his dreadful mistake, he put himself under Christ with the question, "Lord, what will thou have me to do?" In that moment of submission, repentance, and faith, the Lord said to him: "I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom *now I send thee*, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me." We cannot argue with him who contends that he who was thus made an apostle was at the moment under the wrath of God, whose unrepealed sentence of everlasting death was on him. We honor Mr. Campbell for his bold utterance on this point. (Debate

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with McCalla, p. 135.) "Paul's sins were really pardoned when he believed, but he had no solemn pledge of the fact till he washed them away in the waters of baptism."

5. That is a pretty fancy which would identify Cornelius with the centurion who testified at the crucifixion to Christ's divine nature, but such belief has no historical basis. He is called a "godly" man, for the word rendered "devout" is elsewhere translated. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the 'godly.'" "O man of God, follow after 'godliness!'" The original is *εὐσεβής* (already examined) meaning a man who shows piety in his acts. Cornelius feared God. He taught his family, he gave much alms. He prayed to God always. The life was one which would glitter in the churches to-day. Like the rest of the land, he was doubtless looking towards the coming Christ. Spite of all, it is asserted that he was an unsaved sinner; because he was told to send for Peter, who would tell him "words by which he and his house could be saved."

If this is sound inference, we can prove that Timothy all the Ephesian churches, and the college of apostles, were in a state of wrath and condemnation. Paul tells Timothy to give heed to the directions he had received, for "in so doing thou shalt both save thyself and those that hear thee." Peter tells the apostles and elders, "We believe that through the grace of the Lord we shall be saved, even as they"—that is, the Gentiles. Before Cornelius heard the gospel, he was a holy, accepted man. The great difference between his condition before and after the visit of Peter, was, that before, he had been looking forwards to the Messiah, and afterward he looked back to him. Mr. Campbell says he would probably have been saved had he died without hearing the words brought from Joppa, (Debate with Rice, 497,) but denies he was saved as a Christian. Such language conveys no idea. There is one name given under heaven whereby men are saved; and he who looks forwards to him and he who looks back to him, stand on one rock of salvation. Unless Cornelius was an exception to all others of the land and of the age, he had only to change his faith from one expected to one manifested. That he would have been lost if he had rejected the

higher light is true, and so, supposing that to happen which never does happen, will any true servant of God be lost if he becomes a rebel. That he was "saved" by what he heard is true, and every believer is also saved by every fresh act of service.

Had we no account of his baptism, we know that Cornelius was not taught that his sins were pardoned when he "obeyed," and that such was not really the case. But such account is given. Peter was speaking to the assembly and said, "To him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth in him *shall* receive remission of sins." A peculiar Greek construction gives the idea not simply of futurity, but of necessity, of certainty, of the assured undoubted result of remission. It *must* be. This is a point of vast importance in this controversy. Just here we also call attention to another point on which a volume could be written and to which we can only allude. The language quoted to prove actual remission of sins in baptism, was always addressed to Jews, never to Gentiles. The latter might have misunderstood it, the former were trained to the use of such expressions, and knew that a change of visible position only was implied.

As the words were spoken, "To him give all the prophets witness, that whosoever believeth on him *must* receive remission," the Spirit, as at Pentecost, fell on the hearers. Then the baptism took place. We are either to understand that sins are not actually remitted in that rite, or that the godly Cornelius on whom the Spirit had descended, and who had miraculous gifts, was a condemned sinner until he "obeyed" the gospel.

To escape the force of this narrative, it has been said that, had not the Spirit been given, Peter could not have baptized Gentiles, or excused himself for so doing, when he was called to account by the other apostles. His own instructions left him no choice as to his action, and his perfect vindication would have been just as well secured by a post-baptismal outpouring. The crisis was more momentous than that of Pentecost itself, and was identified with that in its teaching, that to Gentile as well as Jew, the baptism of an adult meant not a sinner pardoned, but a Jew formally received into God's family.

6. The five histories examined were all connected with the Holy

Land. The scene now shifts and we have five others which occurred in heathendom. The first carries us to the central table land of Asia Minor, and to that one of the sixteen cities named after one of Alexander's great successors, which was distinguished as Antioch of Pisidia. Situated on a great inland route, it was a place of large traffic, and Romans, Greeks, Jews, natives, and merchants from many lands met in its streets. We are here for the first time, in this book, introduced into the synagogue; and it is best here to describe that service with which the early Church was identified, and from which our Protestant worship and polity have been generally copied. The worshippers sat on a bench running around the room, which thus brought every man to face the central pulpit. On the side of the house next to Jerusalem was a closed chest in which were kept the sacred writings. On entering the worshippers put on the four-cornered *tallith*, after the manner of a scarf or veil. The prayers were recited by an officer, after which the Scripture was, by the minister, handed to the reader, who read the section appointed for the especial Sabbath. These lessons were at all times of a length which would appal a modern congregation. On the last Sabbath of the year, with a prudent desire to be ahead of the devil, who, as they feared, would report them to heaven as having done only what they were obliged to do, they read the portion not only of that day, but also that of the first Sabbath of the new year. After the reading, an opportunity was given for speaking words of teaching or comfort, and then came the closing benediction. God's people worship him now according to the same general manner with which they worshipped him on the banks of the Euphrates twenty-five centuries ago.

It was in such a place that, on the first Sabbath of his sojourn in the city, Paul entered. Putting on the Jewish *tallith*, he announced himself to be a Jewish worshipper, and as such was recognised by the elders who invited him to speak. The address, interesting as the first of Paul's recorded speeches, briefly alluded to ancient prophecies about a Christ. These were fulfilled, John being the witness, in Jesus, who, although put to death by the Jews, arose from the dead, was seen of many who were even



then proclaiming him in the Holy City, and was now announced as the expected Messiah. Through him all believers are justified from all things from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses.

This last expression does not teach that Paul regarded himself as before a company of unpardoned sinners. He calls his hearers *brethren*, a term used often and applied to professed servants of God. He addresses the proselytes as those that fear God. Of the several Greek words translated "fear," the original in this place is one often used, and always implies that holy fear which, while it is the beginning of all wisdom, disappears at last in perfect love, as a star in the sunlight. At the close of the meeting, many of the Jews and proselytes followed the speaker desiring to hear more. Not one had received the rite, and Paul, instead of telling them that until they obeyed the gospel and were baptized for remission of sins they were unpardoned rebels, told them—shade of Campbell—to *continue*, yes, CONTINUE in the grace of God. We must leave this point until some hero of faith shall show how people can be in the grace of God, and at the same time condemned sinners.

A few days after this lamentable failure on the part of Paul to teach *restored* Christianity, he was driven out of Antioch by women, to whom is applied this thrice unhappy English adjective "devout." This is here made to represent a third Greek word which sometimes implies an evil worship, always an inferior one, and was a technical expression designating a proselyte, but conveying no shade of moral or religious character.

7. It was twenty years after Pentecost that two unknown strangers landed at Philippi, in Europe, and began the Christian conquest of the West. About the spot was an especial significance. It was there that three generations back the little all of grand and virtuous which the earth had produced, fighting for liberty, met human iniquity incarnate in Mark Anthony, battling to crush humanity under an eternal despotism. It was there that Brutus met his evil genius, that he and Cassius had lost the battle and the world, and that the last of the Romans fell. It was there that human hope died and human progress was buried. The

loathsome Tiberius, the mad Caligula, Claudius the hog, Nero the matricide, and the capricious and cruel despots who were to follow, were henceforth to be the objects of human worship and the causes of human misery, until civilisation and imperialism alike should expire in protracted throes of death and with such wide-spread ruin and wretchedness as the earth has never seen at any other period. It was at Philippi that the last battle for liberty and happiness was fought and lost. It was at Philippi where on European soil were first heard the notes of what was to make the old world new, until at last—

“Tears washed the trouble from her face.  
 She changed into a child,  
 ‘Mid weeds and wrecks she stood, a place  
 Of ruin, but she smiled.”

On the Sabbath the visitors went to the humble place of prayer on the banks of the Gangras outside of the gate, and there they met a few women with whom was held the first recorded Christian service on the continent. Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's, the Madeleine and Notre Dame, St. Peter's and the other Basilicas at Rome, the Cathedral at Cologne, the church of St. Sophia in Constantinople, and tens of thousands of other edifices built for God were in the future, as the results of that humble gathering.

Among those present was one who like the visitors was a stranger. A heathen by birth, she had left her own faith to serve the true God, and had united herself with his people. She had no doubt been taught to look for the coming Saviour. When she went to the synagogue that morning, she heard that he had been revealed, and at once was enrolled in his cause. She, like the other cases we have examined, was simply transferred from one cause, in which she had probably already found salvation through faith in a coming Saviour; to another cause, where she continued to find salvation through faith in the same Saviour revealed.

8. It was in that same place, identified with the blasted hopes of a ruined race, that a more glorious victory was to be won. If old Sinai shook, and if her lightning flashes and thunder peals proclaimed a present God, it was fitting when a more mighty

manifestation of glory should be made, when the first fruits of a continent, and in one sense of the world, should be brought in, that nature should once more thrill in her inmost being. It was a night of terror and convulsion, when stout hearts that did not fear death, exceedingly feared and quaked because it was felt that God had come on the wing of the storm and with the tread of the earthquake. It was on such a night that the gospel accomplished its greatest possible achievement, that it won its supreme victory, that it touched its highest triumph. The seven cases given show how beginning in the centre of Judaism it expanded out circle after circle, ending with that class of professed believers esteemed lowest, the Gentile female proselyte. One more conquest only was possible, and that was made at midnight in the jail of Philippi, when the first fruits of Europe met the gospel of Asia, when the first recorded meeting took place between out-breaking sin, and the power that was sent to conquer sin.

It is hard to conceive of a more finished result of Roman cruelty and hardness than is found in the Philippian jailor. Two prisoners with flesh bruised, lacerated, bleeding, were put under his charge, one of whom was a man in feeble health who had just had a severe spell of sickness. Without a sentiment of pity, he thrust them into the hell of feter and loathsomeness reserved for the vilest criminals. In mere wantonness of cruelty, he put their feet in the stocks, so that they were forced to lie on their wounds, raw and unwashed, and slowly hardening. When he thought his own life was forfeited, he was ready to plunge into that dark kingdom of Pluto and into the hell of the suicides, the horrors of which had been described by Virgil fifty years before. Cruel as a savage, stern as a stoic, he learned there was a God, not so much through the convulsive throes of the earth, as through the greater miracle of the words of pardoning love which intervened to stay his suicidal hand. He who dared death, came trembling before his prisoners; and there was seen what perhaps never occurred again in the twenty-four centuries of Roman sway, the jailer prostrate before the wretched outcasts he had in charge. From his lips came the question never before recorded in the history of Christianity—the question with which the air

of earth shall echo till all the ransomed host shall be saved to sin no more: "What shall I do to be saved?"

For, of the earth, earthy, dead in trespasses and sins, with soul suited to his cruel office, there had suddenly flashed on him a light from another land. The abyss of his own heart was revealed to his horrified gaze. The blackness of his own life and nature loomed up in his sight, and he knew that he was lost. Casting himself in his terror and self-despair into the slime and foulness of the dungeon, he asked the bound prisoners to lead him from the perdition into which he had sunk.

And it is just here and nowhere else that we have the words which the apostles spoke to sinners, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved."

We are to remember that this direction was given to one in the very uttermost of darkness and ignorance; that this man was the representative sinner, not only of that continent which leads the world, but of the world itself. The answer made to his question and the promise joined to it, are for the ages. If the transfer of God's ancient people from God's ancient cause to the New Kingdom was an era in time, and if the bringing in of righteous Gentiles was another era, the conquest of this outside sinner, whose case is the only one recorded, is a crisis greater than either. It stands for the ages in the unmistakable precision of its teaching.

To confound the condition of this man with that of any before received into the Church, is an error so palpable, that it is amazing that wise and good scholars should have fallen into it. It is said that as nothing is mentioned of repentance, so nothing is said of baptism for remission of sins, and that both were enforced. We rather hold that both were omitted to be named by the apostle. The man was prostrate, trembling, awakened to his lost condition, and did not then need to be exhorted so much to repentance as to faith. When he is informed that belief in Christ will save him, if language has any meaning and words convey any idea, he is taught that in the exercise of such faith and in nothing else, he is to look for pardon. Before one o'clock that morning he was assuaging the wounds he had aggravated, and at the same time

was probably receiving instruction. In the jail that night, he and his family accepted the badge of discipleship. He rejoiced after his baptism, not because he had been baptized, but, as the Greek teaches, because he believed.

9. The eight histories given show how the gospel began in the very heart of Judaism and ended in the ingathering of one whom Paganism itself pronounced lost. It remains but to show its relation to another great movement. A figure so conspicuous in one generation as John, would in that next to it naturally have a following of the two classes—of a remnant of living disciples, and of those who knew him by report. An account of the transfer of these closes this history.

In the 18th of Acts we are told of one who was not a Christian and yet was preaching Christ. He is described as mighty in the Scriptures, instructed in the way of the Lord, fervent in spirit, teaching diligently the things of the Lord, speaking boldly in the synagogue, but knowing only the baptism of John. The word translated “be instructed” is used seven times by the Spirit and implies nothing beyond pure intellectual perception. Apollon understood as a Jew, who knew as John did, that the Messiah was at hand.

It is possible that he had seen John and had been baptized by him. Also that he was one of the sailors who assisted Caligula in his imagined conquest of England. Also that he had visited India and there learned the ten Avatars of Vishnu, the twelve thousand names of Buddha, and the three hundred and sixty million Hindoo gods. Also that his grandmother was that Charmione who waited on Cleopatra, and said her mistress had done well in killing herself, and followed that commended fashion. Of all of these, however, his baptism by John is most improbable. If we accept this, we must believe that a man so fervid, gifted, and learned, listened to and perfectly understood the teachings of John that Christ was at hand, and that for more than twenty years he gave no attention to the fulfilment of promises which were the theme at once of his anxious thought and delighted study. While it is perfectly natural to suppose that a learned Jew, living in another land, whose attention had not been aroused,

should pay no attention to an obscure movement among the lower classes in Jerusalem, it is simply impossible to believe that one whose heart was burning with zeal, should live in such an atmosphere as that of Alexandria, and be able to stop his ears to what must have been repeated continually. That city was the key of the East, the chief mart of the world's commerce, the resort of the merchants of all lands. Besides, it was one of the chief intellectual centres of antiquity. There was the school of mathematics in which Euclid was believed to have taught that science of geometry which originated along the banks of the Nile. There was the school of philosophy which later developed into that system of Neo-Platonism which represented the exhaustion of antique thought and the dissolution of ancient systems, and which prepared the way for what was later and better. There was that school of Jewish theology of which Philo was at once the head and the most splendid representative, which aimed to harmonise the loftiest attainments of Grecian thought with divine revelation, and which is by some supposed to have left its trace in the introduction to the Fourth Gospel. It is, we repeat, impossible to believe that an anxious man could live in such an intellectual centre more than half an active life-time, and have heard nothing of a system for which he was so well prepared, that he eventually accepted it largely from the lips of a woman. Everything indicates that Apollos, who was probably a young man when we first hear of him, had learned the teachings of John many years after that prophet had slept in his bloody grave; that animated by zeal he soon went abroad to tell what he had just heard, and that thus he met those who taught him that John had gone and Christ had come.

No man in his senses will contend that Apollos preaching a coming Christ was an unpardoned sinner up to the time of his meeting Aquila and Priscilla. When received into the Church, he was or was not baptized. If he was not, why was an exception made of him alone of all men, when those who had certainly been baptized by John were required to accept the Christian rite? If he was not baptized, Christian baptism is not necessary for the remission of sins. If he was baptized, he was certainly a saved

man before he received the ordinance, and again baptism is not for actual remission.

10. If the case of Apollos gives the *coup de grace* to the theory, the tenth and last history grinds the broken bones thereof to powder. A number of Jews, perhaps faithful at first, became disciples of John. They moved later to Ephesus, where they heard of Jesus, accepted him, and were received into full fellowship by other Christians, although they had never "obeyed" and were in a state of wrath. This was twenty-three years after Pentecost. When they came up with other disciples from some cause, Paul suspected an irregularity, and asked if they had received the miraculous influences of the Spirit when they became Christians. They told him they had not known at the time of their first belief, that these had been given. Still more amazed, he asked about their baptism. Finding it was that of John, they were directed to accept the Christian rite, and then received miraculous gifts.

If sins are pardoned in this ordinance, we are to believe that these old men, faithful perhaps all their lives, disciples of John, believers on Christ, and identified with his people, were all the time unpardoned rebels, living under God's curse. If it is said they were pardoned when baptized by John, they were not pardoned a second time when they entered the Church; and if not, God does not remit sins in the moment of baptism.

To recapitulate the result of our search of the ten histories examined, nine describe the change of the faith of God's professed servants from a Christ expected to a Christ revealed. Six of the nine instances are of men certainly saved and pardoned before they received the rite in which it is claimed pardon is given to all. Leaving out the day of Pentecost, six histories are about the race of Noah's oldest son, one about his second, and two about the third. The only outside sinner whose case is recorded, was told that if he believed, he should of a certainty be saved. In not one of the ten histories is there the remotest hint that sins are actually remitted in baptism. In every one of them, the contrary is clearly shown.

To notice very briefly another point. On Acts ii. 38th is

imposed the hard task of sustaining two fundamental doctrines. Christ had declared that the world could not receive the Spirit, and as Peter in this verse promises he shall be received after baptism, it is held he is given to the Church only. We do not envy the feelings of him who has been proclaiming this doctrine, after he has spent, let us say, half an hour over a concordance in the examination of it, and discovers, as he must do, that he has fallen into what is little better than a clerical error.

The point can be made perfectly clear. Several words, as *shed, pour, fall on*, are employed in describing the descent of the Spirit, and among these two are chiefly used, one of which, looking towards God, is giving, the other, referring to man, is receiving. The first occurs many times, and as all influences, whether miraculous or gracious, are the gift of God, it designates either of these. The second, when used in this connection, involves an especial receptivity on the part of the individual, and in the Acts *always implies miraculous influence*. In John, we find that Christ, alluding to the gift of Pentecost, spoke concerning the Spirit which believers should receive. In prophetic figure, he breathed on them, and said, Receive the Holy Ghost. In his last words, he told them they should receive the power of the Holy Ghost. He himself, as Peter says, received of the Father the promise of the Spirit and shed down the influences of Pentecost. The baptized Samaritan received the Spirit only through the laying on of the hands of Peter and John, which conferred on them miraculous power. It was then that Simon Magus offered money for the gift that those on whom he laid hands should also receive superhuman endowments. When the gospel was first preached to the Gentiles, they "received" the Holy Ghost as did the apostles at the beginning, speaking with tongues. The twelve disciples of John, after Christian baptism, "received" the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands, and spoke with tongues and prophesied. The expression occurs nowhere else in the historic books. Let the reader turn to the dozen places where the phrase is repeated in John and Luke, and no shadow of doubt can rest on his mind that it refers to miraculous gifts conveyed through the apostles, and to them only. It is enough to cause a shudder of horror, to



think of promises made from thousands of pulpits, that the Spirit should be received after baptism, when Christ made no such engagement. Eternity only will reveal how many trusting to this false hope, have, spite of conscious unfitness, been deluded into entering the Church, to their everlasting undoing.

Many who do not follow arguments are convinced by apt illustrations, and the alleged glory of simplicity about the doctrine of the remission of sins in baptism wins multitudes. God forgives as earthly parents do; and as these always require an act of obedience, so he demands such. We believe that the chord which vibrates in the heart of the earthly parent is in full unison with that which, touched by everlasting love, breaks out in the music of mercy from the bosom of the All-Father, and therefore he does not wait for a physical act. If an earthly parent could see the rising self-reproach, the deep contrition, the purpose of full submission arising in the child, the soft tide of affection would at once sweep over all barriers. He who could know such feelings and be still relentless, is a tyrant, not a father. Ten generations of Protestants have accepted Luther's formula that justification by faith as held or rejected is the mark of a falling or a rising Church, and it can be seen that there is an essentially corrupting and lowering tendency in the Romish and pagan doctrine, that the favor of heaven is given not in connexion with a mental state, but when this mental condition exhibits itself in some bodily service. The horror of sin is flashed on the heart. In self-loathing despair the man looks to the skies and sees the awful figure of eternal majesty. In full purpose of obedience, and sorrow for sin, he comes to the feet of his Maker; but there is no response to his childlike trust, no pity for his deep contrition, the unrepealed sentence of everlasting death is still denounced. He withdraws from the presence and performs a bodily act. He may call it obedience, but never did he do a thing in which personal profit and safety was more the motive. He comes back to find the face that was black with wrath illumined with smiles, the heart that was burning with anger melted in love, the sentence of death turned to the promise of life. An earthly child would turn with loathing and horror from such a parent. When

men bring themselves to believe that God acts in a manner which they would regard as despicable in a sinful weak creature, they are accepting an error which in its deadly poison will eventually be a new proof of the truth of Luther's formula. The boast is often made, that persons in deep anxiety about their spiritual condition would at once be calmed if they were assured that pardon would be accorded in the act of baptism. Nothing more bitter and biting was ever alleged against a cause than this defence. It means that, while the "Christian" agrees with all, that faith and repentance are the only things of importance, and that baptism is valueless except as preceded by these graces, that system turns the mind from the state of the heart before God and causes it to depend on a bodily act. Nor could it be otherwise. If a hundred steps are named, the especial prominence and interest must always be given to the one in connexion with which pardon is accorded. If this is believed to be faith, then faith will be of chief interest. If it is believed to be baptism, then in mental view "the greatest of these is" baptism.

As already suggested, the errors we have noted are largely the reaction from the unscriptural belief and practice of other Churches. Saving faith is often described in the pulpit in a manner which leaves the hearer in hopeless confusion, and which makes him think he must believe over again in some inexplicable manner what he has been believing all his life, and that in so doing he will receive pardon. When it is once fairly asked, whether, when a sinner submits to him as a child to a father, the Lord defers pardon until the act of baptism, or whether he pardons in the moment of submission, all must see that the simplicity, the beauty, the glory, and the naturalness are in the last. We especially commend to our readers a close study of the only logical and precise definition of the distinctions between saving and historical faith, with which it has been our fortune to meet. We much regret that limited space forbids us to transcribe it. It will be found in Dabney's Lectures, Chap. 49, IV., 4.

These pages have been penned in no spirit of controversy. Brought into personal contact, for the first time many years ago, with the system now received, the writer was moved by the

plausible arguments, novel to him, which were advanced, and was perhaps unconsciously influenced by the fact that he had friends, noble and dear as earth affords, in that communion. He returned to the study of the book to which he was especially directed, and read and listened to the strongest arguments represented, careless, provided he found the truth, where he would be led. The result of his search is now given, and the reader can judge whether the book to which appeal is made sustains the doctrine, or whether that doctrine commends itself to reason. If sins are not actually remitted in the act of baptism, one of the greatest curses which has befallen American Christianity is the spirit of the heresy which points men to a way of salvation which God has never taught. It is simply appalling that in this nineteenth century, in the very heart of Protestantism, and with an open Bible, a large section should deliberately return to one of the most detestable dogmas of Romanism, and should base this perversion on an error so crass as confounding the bringing in of outside sinners with the transfer in the apostolic age of professed servants of God from one God-given cause to another. It is almost enough to make one despair of humanity to remember that this gross oversight, which can be detected by simply reading the ten narratives, was the teaching of no ignorant enthusiast, but of one of the strong men of the century, a prince among financiers who died worth more than a million, an original thinker, some of whose views have become the property of Christendom, a profound scholar, a voluminous author, an orator of highest style, an acute controversialist, conspicuous as an educator and a journalist;—his life's work gathering around such a central doctrine, and this with such a basis. It is almost enough to raise a doubt as to the possibility of understanding the Scriptures, when we think of the great body which has followed these teachings, with its learned ministry, its able press, its colleges, its universities, and its authors, reading this very book of Acts for a half century and failing to understand its plainest teaching; rejecting the belief of the Church of all ages respecting the most awful of divine teachings, the influence of the Spirit, and falling into this error from the oversight of not examining the few connections in which

the word occurs: aiming to restore primitive Christianity by selecting as a profession of faith a passage which every scholar knows to be a bungling forgery, and which, if genuine, could only by as ludicrous a misapplication as ever fell from the beak of parrot, be put in the mouth of any but a Jewish worshipper; aiming to unite Christendom under a title which, however all now glory in it, was a nickname invented by witty heathen, never endorsed by the Spirit, and in the usurpation of that title virtually unchurching all other believers; protesting against the "sects," and of all Protestant bodies the most sectarian; reacting from the theology of the Middle Ages, by making such a return to Romish doctrine as had never occurred in the centuries since the Reformation; preaching continually about that "New Kingdom" which is declared to be righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, so as often to stir up a partisan spirit, and bitterness, and prejudice, and disputation which would darken a campaign in politics; professing to simplify the gospel, and, by restoring Christianity, to cure unbelief, and too often producing on outsiders an indescribable deadness and indifference, and too often maiming for life the religious element in those who have been enticed into their communion by the specious promises that in baptism they would be pardoned and would receive the Spirit, and who have found, after entrance, that it was a despotism. Other churches with rigid examinations and close scrutiny of candidates are filled with unworthy members. Here men are told that the faith needed before baptism is (*Religion in America*, 502) "believing what is testified of Jesus," which devils certainly exercise, that a confession repeated by every lost spirit is the only external manifestation of change of heart required; that pardon referred to contrition and loving trust is accorded to a physical act; that gracious help, withheld from the lost sinner in his darkness and sore need, will be received by the pardoned saint; and that other Churches exhibit a degenerate Christianity. More artistic arrangements to induce self-deception could not be devised. In any Church it is hard to make unworthy members see their condition; whereas with the Romanist, the communion services are made the chief, and often the only objects of the sabbath gathering, the

chances are desperate. In the early Church, long was the probation, extending over months and years, thorough the preparation, and clear the proved fitness of the catechumen, before he was allowed to join in the highest of mysteries. Saints who were in deaths daily, knowing not but that before another Sabbath they would be wearing the martyr's crown, communed weekly. And yet even with these, in churches founded and presided over by Apostles, familiarity deadened the soul to the awful significance of the holy rite, and brought danger, disease, and death. This history gives no authority for making the most sublime and sacred of rites a common thing to men who are directed to enter the church with no holiness except of their own creation, and to expect no spiritual influences until after baptism. Still less does it encourage that shocking practice of allowing private members to celebrate what is called the Lord's Supper, but which many think to be merely a hideous, although unintentional, mockery. It was not without scriptural ground that Protestants, after fairly testing it, abandoned the early usage. When all the Churches, as now, swarm with unsaved sinners and inconsistent Christians, to multitudes frequent communions are as the upas tree, poisoning the spiritual life. As good food will often kill a diseased person, so every repetition of the act by one unprepared, means greater hardness of heart, blindness of mind, and searing of conscience. The outer signs that the poison is doing its fell work, are a Pharisaic desire to proselyte, a bitterness of sectarianism manifesting itself in abuse of "the sects," an expression familiarly used by Romanists, Greeks, Puseyites, and all other forms of false Christianity, and an immovable assurance of being personally accepted of heaven, and, ecclesiastically, of being in the only right way. Christ seems to point out eating and drinking in his presence as one of those sacred privileges, which, abused, will make even workers of iniquity, whose doom is perdition, rise from the grave with confident expectation of salvation. A few of exalted piety are helped in their holy lives by this frequency of communion. But this is no reason for inviting the many to eat and drink what in multitude of cases will be "damnation."

We have written so severely about errors sometimes found in our own Church, that we hope we shall not be considered as harsh in what we now write of others. We regard it as the highest praise to say that, if we have thrown any light on any passage of Scripture, we are sure that none will be so thankful as the many noble men and women of that belief which we are reviewing, who desire only to find God's will and to walk in it. We solemnly believe there are fatal errors in the system. We also believe that the unscriptural methods of other Churches are largely responsible for this movement. When those abuses shall be corrected, we believe that the many of this name who are holy, and the many who are wise and learned, will bring this great body doctrinally into line with the free Christian thought of all ages. Until this shall be done, and the destroying errors have been abandoned, the awful warning of God is uttered, "Come out of her, my people."

WILLIAM STODDERT.