

239. The Modes of Baptizing.

Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins. *Acts 22, 16.*

The candidate for Baptism is to be baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." In the name and by authority of this Triune God, Baptism is to be administered. And when Christ commands: "*Baptize them,*" that means that water is to be applied to the person to be baptized. But the question now is how the water is to be applied.

The Baptists lay great stress on the mode of baptism. They insist on immersion, that is, on putting the whole body under water, and they rebaptize those not immersed. It is certain, however, that immersion was not always practised in the apostolic age. But even if the early Christians had employed only immersion, their example alone would not prove that we must do so also, or we should have to do many other things they did. The only question is what the word "baptize" means. According to the Bible, "baptize" means any manner of applying water, be it by washing, pouring, sprinkling, or immersing, and the Baptists are wrong in maintaining that immersion is the only right way.

Luke 11, 38 we read that a Pharisee who had invited Him to a meal at his house marveled that Jesus had not first washed ("baptized" is the Greek word) Himself before dinner. Heb. 9, 10 divers washings (baptizings) are mentioned. Mark 7, 4 it is said of the Pharisees that, when they come from the market, they do not eat except they wash (baptize). "And many other things there be which they have received to hold, as the washing [literally, baptizing] of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of *tables.*" Who can believe that the Pharisees regularly immersed themselves and their tables! To baptize, therefore, means to, wash. But washing may take place by immersion, by pouring, by sprinkling, or some other application of water. Since, then, Scripture nowhere says that immersion is the only right mode of Baptism, no man should assert the contrary. It was impossible to immerse the three thousand on the Day of Pentecost, and surely the keeper of the prison at Philippi was not immersed.

Prayer.

Lord God, keep us, we beseech Thee, from despising the simple visible element in this sacred act of baptism and let the eyes of our faith look upon Thy command and Thy promise, nay, upon Thyself, upon the blood of Christ and Thy Spirit, which, being connected with the water, accomplish what Thou hast promised. May we realize that it is Thou, the Triune God, who here dost administer Baptism, forgiving our sins for Christ's sake, implanting faith in us, and receiving us as Thy children. Grant that this Thine ordinance may never be set aside, and let us learn that the mode of application is a matter of Christian liberty. Amen.

Wash it, Jesus, in Thy blood,
From the sin-stain of its nature;
Let it rise from out this flood
Clothed in Thee, a new-born creature;
May it, washed as Thou hast bidden,
In Thine innocence be hidden!

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