

**CONVERSATIONS
ON THE MODE OF
CHRISTIAN BAPTISM**

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Conversations on the mode of Christian baptism by Alexander W. M'Leod

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TO
THE REV. RICHARD KNIGHT,
WESLEYAN-METHODIST MISSIONARY, AND CHAIRMAN OF
THE NOVA-SCOTIA DISTRICT,
THE
FOLLOWING TREATISE
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED
AS A MARK OF
THE ESTEEM IN WHICH HE IS HELD
BY
THE AUTHOR.

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CONVERSATIONS
ON THE
MODE OF CHRISTIAN BAPTISM.

SECTION I.

Different opinions prevail as to the SCRIPTURAL MODE of administering Christian Baptism.

Question. Is there a perfect agreement, between professing Christians, respecting the *mode* or *manner* in which Christian baptism should be administered?

Answer. No.

Q. Will you state in what the disagreement consists?

A. Some think *immersion* essential to baptism, so that the application of water in any other way is not baptism; whilst others, and these too the greater part of the professedly Christian world, believe, that the application of water, in the name of the sacred Trinity, to a proper subject, by *sprinkling* or *pouring*, is Christian baptism.

Q. The precise question, then, on the mode of baptism, is, whether *immersion* is *essential* to the ordinance, or the *only* way of performing it?

A. Yes.

Q. In this case, what is required of the *exclusive immersionists* to prove?

A. Either that the word *baptism* signifies *immersion only*; or that *every* instance of Christian baptism, recorded in the New Testament, was by *immersion*; and, in fact, that the inspired writers have evidently *restricted* baptism to *immersion exclusively*.

Q. On the ground, that these points cannot be proved, what will be the consequence?

A. The consequence will be, that the system of exclusive immersion falls to the ground, and, as being opposed to sprinkling and pouring, is decidedly unscriptural.

Q. Is there any reason to believe that these points are capable of being proved?

A. Yes.

Q. Will you state the reasons why you believe immersion is not essential to baptism?

A. With pleasure, in the following sections.

SECTION II.

Not one of the Inspired Writers has said that IMMERSION is ESSENTIAL to BAPTISM.

Q. Has any one of the inspired writers ever said, that immersion is *necessary* to constitute Christian baptism; so essential, that without it there is no baptism?

A. No.

Q. Is formal proof of this denial necessary?

A. No: as the exclusive immersionists *have never, and can never*, produce the passage from the Bible, which expressly asserts that immersion is necessary to baptism.

Q. Has the Holy Ghost, then, by express declaration, restricted baptism to immersion?

A. No.

Q. Has this fact an important bearing on the subject in question?

A. Yes: as it shows, that *all* the evidence in favour of exclusive immersion is *only inferential*.

Q. Would you suppose this to be the case, from the *mode* in which the advocates of exclusive immersion generally speak on the subject?

A. From the *confident* manner in which they speak, I should suppose, that their evidence from the Scriptures was *not at all* inferential, but of a *strictly positive* character; indeed, that the *word of God* has in *express terms* RESTRICTED baptism to immersion.

Q. When they speak thus confidently, what course would you advise to be pursued?

A. Just ask them to show, "Thus saith *the Lord*," or the plain and positive declaration of any one of the inspired writers, in support of their opinion; and it will be found, that, instead of producing such a declaration, they have to betake themselves to a kind of proof altogether inferential, thus leaving the inferential proof open to investigation.

SECTION III.

In no one place has any one of the inspired writers EXPRESSLY SAID, that any one person, when BAPTIZED, was TOTALLY IMMERSSED, or PLUNGED UNDER WATER, by another.

Q. Has any one of the inspired writers ever said, in express terms, that any one person, when baptized, was totally immersed, or plunged under water, by another?

A. No.

Q. What is said on the subject?

A. It is said, that persons were baptized; but never, that they were totally immersed, or plunged under water.

Q. In case a person should say, that there is an express declaration, to the effect, that individuals, when baptized, were totally immersed, what would you do?

A. I would ask him to produce the passage; which I know can never be done.

Q. How, then, must the manner, in which the actual baptisms, mentioned in the New Testament, were performed, be determined?

A. Whether they were performed by immersion, or by sprinkling or pouring, must be determined by circumstances.

SECTION IV.

IMMERSION is not calculated for UNIVERSAL PRACTICE.

Q. Is immersion adapted for universal practice?

A. No. There are circumstances in which persons may be placed when immersion would be impracticable.

Q. Will you mention some of these circumstances?

A. For instance: it would be impossible to immerse the inhabitants of a desert, or of a besieged city, within whose precincts there was no collection of water, or of certain countries, in the time of great drought, or of the more northern regions, during the severity of the winter season. Nor could the ordinance be performed by immersion with respect to a person on a sick or death bed.

Q. What do you infer from these circumstances?

A. That the God of wisdom, who has commanded his Ministers to baptize ALL nations, has not restricted baptism to