

# THE LUTHERAN VISITOR.

Revs. Rude & Miller, Editors.

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## Communications.

For the Lutheran Visitor.  
Mode of Baptism.

[Concluded.]

II. The circumstances attending the administration of baptism among the early christians afford no proof that it was dispensed by immersion.

To establish this proposition, we will now inquire into the mode practiced by the first heralds of christianity.

1. What mode of baptism then, was practiced by John the Baptist? It may be premised, however, that the mode of dispensing this rite is not a matter of great importance in this connection, since his baptism was not christian baptism; and can therefore have no special force in fixing the gospel method of baptism instituted by Jesus Christ. It may however reflect light upon the practical application of baptism.

(a) John also was baptizing in Bethany near to Salim, because there was much water there." (Jno. iii: 23.) Why, it is asked, did John choose a place for administering baptism where there was much water—*udata*—if he merely sprinkled the people? forgetting that there might be a necessity for a copious supply of water, at a place in a warm climate where vast concourses of people assembled, apart from immersion. That such a place was selected with a view to submersion is altogether gratuitous. The Bible nowhere states this, nor even hints at it. We are left to conjecture the motive by the light of circumstances. The climate was warm and oppressive, and pure fresh water was scarce and of great value. The multitude was immense, amounting probably to hundreds of thousands; and for "there went out unto him all the land of Judaea and they of Jerusalem, and were baptized," &c. (Matt. iii: 5, 6.) No doubt many traveled thither on mules and asses, and remained there over night; hence much water was absolutely necessary for other purposes than immersion. John had been baptizing in the vicinity of Jordan, where there was more water for immediate use—hence he went from a large body of water to a place where the supply was comparatively small, but preferable on account of quality. *Polla udata* ought to be translated many waters or streams; see 2 Kings ii: 20; where the Hebrew word Septuagint, both, use the plural—Hebr.: *min*; Sept.: *Ta udata*—the spring or stream flowing from the water or fountain, which separates afterwards in several small streams, and this would better express the various rivulets in that region. This sufficiently accounts for the fact under consideration, without the slightest necessity of resorting to submersion. If total immersion had been the practice, and the "much water" had been required for that purpose, would it not have been wise in John to have remained at Bethabara? Does not his departure from a location of more water to one of many waters rather disprove the doctrine of plunging? This passage then, is found to have no connection with the point at issue; or if it has, it furnishes an argument against submersion.

(b) The advocates of immersion insist that they "were baptized of him (Jn) in Jordan." (Matt. iii: 6.) But on appears in other connections, and if the advocates of the translation insist upon that, and no other, then what will they do with Heb. x: 12, where we are told that Christ "went out on the right hand of God?" Here the same word occurs. Therefore, if we must necessarily translate *Jordan*, we must also necessarily translate in the right hand of God—the word is the same in both places. But as we, of course, translate, in one place, "at or by the right hand of God," so too we may in the other place read, "at or by the Jordan."

But if it is still insisted by immersionists that John must have submerged our Saviour, because we read in Matt. iii: 16, that "Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water, we reply that in this place should be translated simply, from. To prove this position, we refer to Acts xii: 10, where *apo* again occurs. When the angel which delivered Peter out of prison had conducted him through the iron gate and one street, it forthwith "descended—*apo*—from him." But if we must necessarily translate out of *Jordan*, then, to be consistent, we must

translate *apo* here, out of, and read thus: the angel departed out of Peter, which of course does not apply—the angel simply went away from him.

In these passages of Scripture, to which allusion has been made, and to which immersionists appeal in proof of their doctrine, we read of no dipping—nor of anything else, when rightly understood, that can possibly favor such an idea. Why then should John have immersed our Saviour? But when Jesus went to John (who was near the river) to signify the act of anointing, he took water and poured it on the head of the Saviour—signifying likewise the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which did at that time descend "like a dove, and light upon him."

2. The length to which our paper is growing precludes an investigation, at this time, of the apostles mode of baptism. It may be remarked however that the facts recorded in the case of the three thousand converts on the day of Pentecost, and the circumstances attending their baptism, afford no warrant that they were immersed; but the strong presumption in the case is, that agreeing to the well known Jewish custom, they took bunches of hyssop and sprinkled the multitude.

Neither does the baptism of Lydia and her household, nor of Cornelius and his friends, nor of Saul of Tarsus, nor of the Philippian jailer and his household, nor Paul's baptizing at Corinth and Ephesus, warrant the opinion that the apostles immersed the early converts to christianity; but the circumstances attending their examples of baptism go far towards proving that the apostles did not practice immersion, but that they poured or sprinkled water upon the persons whom they baptized.

III. The figurative language of the New Testament, in reference to baptism, does not favor the idea of immersion.

In Rom. vi: 3, 4, we have the following reference to baptism: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized unto Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Herein the apostle sets forth the fact that, by being baptized into the death of Christ, we profess to be dead and buried in respect to sin, without any reference whatever to the mode in which the burial or the baptism has been performed. And as Christ lived a new life after His death and resurrection, so we, having professed Christ at our baptism, are now bound to lead a new life. "Buried with him in baptism," signifies that, as a man literally dead and buried is cut off from all temporal connections and indulgences, so the baptized man is really, or at least by profession, cut off from sin, and by the grace of God becomes dead to it; and in this manner becomes conformable to the death of Christ in his great design and efficiency, which are to purify to Himself a peculiar people, dead to the world, dead to carnal ambition, and secluded from every unhallowed practice.

There are several other figurative passages of Scripture, to which immersionists appeal in support of their practice, which we would like to notice in this connection; but the length to which our paper has already grown, admonishes us to hasten to a close. But in none of the remaining passages to which immersionists appeal can we find any warrant for their mode of baptism when they are correctly interpreted. Nowhere in the Holy Scriptures do we find the slightest evidence in favor of submersion—no word, no remark, no fact requiring it. But on the other hand, the argument preponderates strongly on the side of baptism by affusion.

We conclude by hastily grouping several reasons why we do not regard the mode of baptism as an essential, as well as several reasons why we prefer affusion or sprinkling to immersion.

1. God equally approves sincere christians, whether baptized by immersion or sprinkling. If they are true believers, they are equally objects of God's approbation, through faith in His Son, irrespective of the manner in which they have been baptized.

2. The practice of baptizing by affusion is more scriptural, because it alone is adapted to the designed universality of the christian religion. It is entirely compatible with the perfect establishment of the church of God in every climate, in every region, in every season, on every occasion, and among every people, kindred and tongue.

3. Baptism by pouring is most consistent with the simplicity and spirituality of the gospel than submersion. Christ has blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us; but if we must submit to the ordinance of submersion—the frequently painful and dangerous, and sometimes impracticable burden of total plunging, where is the freedom? where the rest from ritual pressure?

4. Our mode of baptizing is more scriptural, edifying and appropriate; because it is not calculated, like submersion, to give rise to anything that is indecorous.

5. Affusion is the more scriptural and appropriate mode, because it accords better with Peter's definition of baptism, which is, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God."

6. Affusion should be preferred, because it does not, like submersion, interfere with devotional feeling and destroy it. Timid consciences have been distressed, if not with the direct assertion, at least by the artful insinuation, that immersion is all in all—that there can be no safe christianity without it. And,

7. Lastly, affusion does not, like the doctrine of submersion, lead to such glaring absurdities.

Hence, as the scriptures have no where expressly informed us of the precise mode in which water employed in baptism shall be applied, we have the best grounds to infer that our mode of applying it is more significant and appropriate, and to say the very least, quite as likely to be accompanied by the Divine blessing.

## Selections.

### Colleges as an Agency of the Church.

The value of colleges as an agency of the church in the cause of Christ is often inadequately estimated. Many persons, whilst appreciating the direct bearing of theological seminaries, or home and foreign missions, on the triumphs of the gospel, fail to see any close relation of colleges to this great end. But they form one of the grandest agencies in the work of the church and the successes of christianity.

### IN EARLY HISTORY.

From the time that Christ took the twelve under his own tuition for three years, to prepare them to preach his truth, education has been felt to be peculiarly consecrated to the Redeemer's service. So it was at once used. During the early centuries, the church established, in her service, great schools of learning at Antioch, Caesarea, Alexandria, Edessa and elsewhere. History reports church schools in six different countries, the establishment of some of which dated back almost, if not quite, to apostolic times. It is noteworthy that the cities where the apostles established the chief centres of their influence were all literary centres. All through the subsequent centuries of the growth of the church and the spread of the gospel, education was used in carrying on the work. During the reformation period, christian universities were planted and employed for the purification and service of the church. It was one of the first aims of the Reformers, to have control of the revival of learning then taking place, and to bring the schools into front rank in the conflict with Rome. In Germany, Switzerland, England and Scotland, this aim was accomplished, and these countries are to-day Protestant. In France, the Reformation failed to get possession of the universities, and unhappy France is still under the heel of the spiritual despotism of Rome.

### IN OUR COUNTRY.

In our country, the church, in all its denominations, has always recognized education, especially college education, as one great phase of its work for Christ and his cause. No denomination has felt that it could prosper, or do its work for the Master and souls, without one or more. Our American colleges, as an agency in the education of our country, have been the outgrowth of this felt necessity. They have been mostly, and from the first, established by the churches. When the church came to these shores, it soon began to found colleges, to take possession of the education of the country, and carry it on in the interest of christi-

anity, in order to bless the land by making it a land of christian education. The leading denominations have planted them all over the country. There are now about three hundred colleges and collegiate institutions of all grades—some of them unfortunately of very unworthy grade—under the auspices of the different churches. The multiplication of their number, has probably been too rapid. It would be better, instead of starting so many new colleges, to make those we have twice as strong and efficient. But the fact is clear, that the church, in all its branches, has, along understood a most important part of its work to lie in the line of the higher education. The establishment and carrying on of colleges, as truly belongs to it, as does the building of churches, or the keeping up of Sunday-schools, or the sending of missionaries to heathen shores.

### THEIR EFFICIENCY.

Another fact, equally clear, is, that the church's work through this instrumentality has been grandly efficient and fruitful. It has proved a mighty agency in the cause of Christ and the victories of christianity. Many persons fail to estimate aright the usefulness of this arm of the church's service. Indeed, unless special attention is bestowed upon it, and the results accomplished are carefully traced out, the amount of the good done is never measured. Attention is asked to this point.

It may be too much to say that the Saviour's tuition of the twelve, for three years, giving them that peculiar divine education, was the condition and source of their wonderfully faithful ministry, in planting the church, or in writing the gospels and epistles that are to carry the Redeemer's truth down to the end of time. But unquestionably, during the next several generations and centuries the power of the christian schools already mentioned transcended all measurement. They gave the church the great men who were its chief bishops, teachers and workers in those early centuries—the great church fathers, such as Melito, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Tertullian, Cyprian, and others, who, being dead, yet speak. These, and their co-laborers by the hundred, chiefly in connection with or from these schools, did the main work of holding forth the word of life and fighting the battles of christianity in that age. Those seats of christian learning presented the highest summits of the church's power in that day, reflecting the light over the world, and sending their influence, through history, down the course of ages. During the subsequent periods, on through the gloomy middle ages, the cloister schools and the missionaries from them were the main conservators of the piety of the church, and the chief laborers to extend its borders. It was through the universities that God prepared the way for the great Reformation, in the labors of such men as Huss and Jerome of Prague, Wessel of Urfurt, Erasmus and Beuchlin from Paris. And when God gave the Reformation itself, the instrumentality was the same Wittenberg—what a power it was! As the cradle, the nursery and the citadel of the Reformation, the University of Wittenberg stood as the central point of interest, the chief point of power, in that century. "Its lecture rooms were the chief pulpit of both Luther and Melancthon." Students flocked there from all quarters, and there carried the truth and fire of the Gospel over all Germany. Calvin found the Bible in a French university; and his chief influence in Switzerland and in other countries was through his famous academy at Geneva. Paul Fleury says: "He was indebted to the academy, which soon became greatly frequented, for the rapid diffusion of his doctrines in Germany, Holland, France and England." In England for a long time nearly all the leaders of the Reformation were teachers in the universities. "The first rays of the sun from on high," says D'Aubigne, "glided with their fires at once the Gothic colleges of Oxford and the antique schools of Cambridge." So that, in that great Reformation in which the church broke the bondage in which Rome had fettered it, which has changed the face of the world, out of which has come freedom of conscience, Protestant christian life, free constitutions, and national liberty, the grand work was not done without these schools, but mainly by and through them. They were the

mighty instruments by which the church was blessed, and by which the church blessed the world.

### OUR HIGHER EDUCATION MADE CHRISTIAN.

In our own country, the church's efforts through its colleges have, without doubt, been among the most successful and fruitful of all its work for Christ's kingdom. The colleges have given power to the church—the church has wielded power through its colleges. No one can measure the gain there has been to christianity in our country, or the advantage to the church, in making the higher education of our land and a thoroughly christian education. Though these colleges are unsectarian, christianity, in its essential doctrines, is fully and constantly taught. Its truths are made to pervade and mould all the teaching. They are poured into the minds of the students through all their daily studies, whether of language, history, science, philosophy or morals. The life of christianity shapes the culture that is to shape the young. The church has thus been training men for all the more prominent and influential callings in life—for the law, medicine, the ministry, for the press, authorship, teaching, for legislative and judicial positions—giving a christian education for all those spheres of activity that most directly and decisively shape the character, and wield the power of the nation. One need only look over the roll of a few of the older colleges, and follow the men whose thinking and activity have influenced most broadly, beneficially and permanently the life of the nation, and he will see that the church has itself, by and in its colleges, trained the mind, shaped the sentiments, and developed the power of these men for good. There is not a nook or corner of the land to which the church has not given men thus moulded and ennobled in its colleges, to stand up for Christ and bear onward the standard of religion.

The colleges confer incalculable blessings on secular life. It is said, "Cromwell seized the thoughts of Milton and put them into action." The fact expresses a law of progress. The great results that change the face of society, and send their reports round the world, often have their main spring in the quiet laboratories of thought and study. Things are first thought out, and then brought to pass on the great stage of action. The thought is not lost, but falls like seed into the general mind, and its fruits are gathered far and wide. The masses in their toil and efforts are mostly but acting out the thoughts of others. The French revolution was originally only a thought. The discovery of America was at first only a thought in the mind of the Genoese student. When we look on the telegraph, with astonishment at its wonders and gratitude for its benefits, we are apt to forget the long line of students of science, who have, in obscure laboratories, toiled for years over the nature of electricity, out of which Prof. Morse at last gave the result to mankind. Our railroads, steamships, our manufactories and wonderful machinery, filling the world with their din and blessings, are all the fruits of the science and knowledge developed mostly through the agency of colleges and universities. Without these brain shops, where would be the world's boasted progress? Where would be the practical activities that now crowd the world, and every home, with their wonderful results—that fill the land with wealth and luxury? How much is paid back to the struggling colleges! The higher education, controlled by the church, determines, and sweeps down through all the rest. From the university and college, the power flows down and out through the lower and common schools. The teacher, the text-book, the scientific principles, are all, remotely sometimes, but yet certainly, from the colleges. There is a steady stream of power and influence flowing out from them, and no man can get outside of the benefits. Can any man over-estimate the importance of thus christianizing the higher education of the country? Has the church any mightier agency, save the pulpit itself, for the triumph of christian truth, or to bless the world?

EDUCATION OF THE MINISTRY.

But the colleges are necessary for the direct work of the church. In them is given the intellectual, and, to no small degree, the spiritual training of those who are to preach

the gospel, and minister at the church's altars. There is no measuring of this item of usefulness. Can any one estimate the value to the Congregational church and the cause of Christ in New England and all the land, of the education of its great army of ministers? Who can tell how much of the strength, prosperity, and success of the Presbyterian Church in this country, is due to the thorough education of its ministry? Have not the colleges, that have done this work, done a great service to the cause of Christ? It is beginning to be understood, that the denomination which educates the most and the best, will outrank others, and other advantages being equal, become the most successful and powerful. The college stands at the heart of all the church's work, and its agency is necessary to furnish the ministers for its pulpits, and the laborers for both the home and foreign mission service. And when missionaries plant the standard of Christ on heathen shores, they find it the best and only way of permanent success to establish church schools, and to develop them at once into seminaries of higher order, to instruct the young and educate native preachers and missionaries. One of the grandest items of missionary work done for many years, has been the establishment, by Mr. Roberts, of a christian college on the Bosphorus in Turkey. From it the light will shine through all Asia Minor, and into thousands of souls.

From all this, it is apparent that the church has no more important agency for the success of christian truth than its colleges. The interests dependent on them are incalculable. The money that the church has spent in establishing these institutions has been among the most servicable, and productive of good, of all its investments for Christ and his cause. It may be questioned whether the same amount it takes for the colleges, invested in any other way of benevolent effort whatever, can be made to do anything like as much good—to do good so broadly, so gradually so long.

WHY COLLEGES REQUIRE ENDOWMENT.

Christian colleges are thus a part of the benevolent agency of the church. This answers the question sometimes asked: "Why must they be endowed?" They are organized, not to make money, but to do good. Their value is not simply in affording a thorough education, but especially in the fact that they cheapen it and bring it within reach of almost every earnest young man who may desire it. By the benevolence that endows them, the higher education is open to the masses. No college of high order can be established or carried on without an endowment. An academy, with a few teachers and limited appliances, may be made to pay its own way. But to found a college, erect its buildings, supply it with chemical and philosophical apparatus, man it with a corps of competent and able professors, furnish its libraries, give it scientific cabinets and appliances, and keep it supplied with the various necessary aids to advanced and thorough study and investigation—all this requires an amount of money that, without an endowment, would make the cost of a college education so high, that only a very few could ever attain it. The necessary tuition would put it beyond reach. None but the very wealthy could afford it for their sons. Not one in a dozen of those who now enter the ministry could obtain the needed education. The poor, or those with moderate means, could not enter college halls. The church and society could not be blessed by the thousands from these classes, who now rise to be their ornaments and power. But in our christian colleges the students may have all the advantage of a large corps of instructors and ample educational appliances, for as low a tuition as is often charged in a boy's school. In their halls the poor may stand by the side of the rich, and have an equal preparation for a life of service and honor in the church and the world.—*Lutheran Observer.*

Instead of wonders ceasing when we enter heaven, they will but increase for the more we know, the more wonderful does everything become. Wonder belongs to knowledge not to ignorance. The learned man wonders at a flower, or insect, sees nothing to attract his attention. A primrose, I doubt not, is more an object of admiration and wonder to an angel than to us.—*Norman Macleod.*

## Almost Persuaded.

Reader, are you in this critical condition of the "almost persuaded"? Then take with you these two thoughts: You may never be so near salvation again: You are on the very threshold of decision, but if you go away back into your sins, you may never again be brought so near the gate. Felix never found the convenient season for which he professed to wait. Do not, therefore, stifle conviction. Do not choke down the cry that is pressing for utterance in your heart. Let it come out now lest it never come again. Look at that blind man sitting at the wayside. Hear how he raises his voice above the noise of the passing crowd, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." They bid him hold his peace, but does he? Nay, he cries so much the more a great deal, "Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me." Would you know the reason of his earnestness? Here it is. Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. It was a glorious opportunity, but it was a transient one, and if he allowed the Saviour to pass then, He might never pass that way again; so he cried, and cried again, until he received his sight. Go then, and imitate him. Seize the present opportunity, and let the "almost" ripen into the "altogether."

One thought more. Almost saved if it be no more in, in the end, altogether lost, and that too in the most melancholy of circumstances. When after safely circumnavigating the globe, the Royal Charter went to pieces in Moelfra Bay, on the coast of Wales, it was my melancholy duty as a minister in Liverpool to visit and seek to comfort the wife of the first officer, made by that calamity a widow. The ship had been telegraphed from Queenstown and she was sitting in the parlor expecting her husband, with the table spread for his evening meal, when the messenger came to tell her he was drowned. Never can I forget the grief so stricken and tearful, with which she wrung my hand, as she said, "So near home, and yet lost." That seemed to me the most terrible of human sorrows. But ah! that is nothing to the anguish which must wring the soul who is compelled to say at last, "Once I was at the very gate of heaven, and had almost entered in, but now, I am in hell." My reader, may this awful soliloquy never be yours, and to this end, let the "almost" in you become now the "altogether."

YOUR OWN PLACE.—There is a place for every man—his own proper place, where he ought to be. God has designed him for it, and it belongs to him and to no one else; and every man may know and find his place, if he will. It must be his place, and he must go to God heartily praying, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? Where wilt Thou have me to be?" Let him surrender his own will to God's will, and he shall make no mistake.

And it is a most blessed thing to be in one's own place. There, one is most happy—more happy than he can be in any other place. God will be with him there. He will cheer, and strengthen, and sustain him. He may have trials; but he meets them in the path of duty, and God's grace is sufficient for him. The same compassionate God, who was with Daniel in the den of lions, and with the three Hebrews in the burning fiery furnace, will not leave him nor forsake him. Being in his own proper place, he may go to God with confidence, and he shall be comforted and supported. He shall be joyful in all his tribulation.

WILL YOU BE MISSED?—Are you cedars planted in the house of the Lord, casting a cool and grateful shadow on those around you? Are you palm trees, fat and flourishing, yielding bounteous fruit, and making all who know you bless you? Are you so useful that, were you once away, it would not be easy to fill your place again, but people, as they pointed to the void in the plantation, the pit in the ground, would say, "It is here that the old palm tree diffused his familiar shadow, and showered his mellow clusters?" Or are you a peg, a pin, a rootless, branchless, fruitless thing that may be pulled up any day, and no one ever care to ask what has become of it? What are you doing? What are you contributing to the world's happiness, or the church's glory? What is your business?—*Rev. Jas. Hamilton.*