

# THE ACT

OF

# CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

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## CHAP. I. THE IMPORTANCE OF BAPTISM.

**C**hristian baptism is a positive duty enjoined upon each child of God by all the authority with which any law of God is enforced. Christ, when he commanded it, declared that he was clothed with all power in heaven and earth. In addition to his most emphatic **command**, he affectionately urges obedience to it upon his regenerated disciples by all the motives drawn from his love and death for their salvation—in fact, he makes it a **test** of the sincerity of their profession of friendship for him: "*If a man love me he will keep my commandments.*" "*Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.*" "*Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things I command you?*" Of the "all things whatsoever" Christ singles out, he mentions but one act as representative of all, and that act is **baptism**. He has made it **the** initial act of our Christian life and service. He has constituted it **the** act in which we confess to the world, in forceful symbolism, what Christ has done for us—**saved** us; and the act in which we profess before angels and men, our supreme allegiance to him with the Father and Holy Spirit, and obligate ourselves to cordially obey **all** things whatsoever he commands us.

Christ has also appointed baptism to be **the one** and **only rite** of initiation into his visible churches, and thereby into his kingdom, a duty he requires and enjoins upon every one who has received the grace of his

salvation. Indeed, he implies that the professed disciple who refuses to united with his people—with whom, and in the midst of whom, he declares he will always be—occupies the attitude of open hostility to him and his cause. *“He that is not for me is **against me**, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”* As certainly as we love Christ, or God, we will **love**, and love to **be with** the children of God. *“If we love him that begot, we shall love them also who are begotten of him.”*

Christ positively requires his children to observe his Supper, in remembrance of him. “This do” is a command as inviolable as any specific law of the Decalogue, and its violation involves us in equal guilt. If we are the recipients of his grace, we can not, with impunity, refuse or delay to obey the command to observe his Supper. To refuse to observe it is to **aggravate** the guilt of its violation.

Now the Lord’s Supper is a church ordinance, and within the sacred inclosure of his churches, and we can not partake of it without being introduced into one of them. To attempt to eat the Supper outside, or in an organization not his church, is to eat and drink unworthily.

But no one ever was, is to-day, or ever can be, a member of an evangelical or Christian church, or of the kingdom of Christ, unless baptized as Christ was, and as he commands us to be, which will be fully shown in the closing section of this Tract.

All Christians, how widely soever they differ about other things, agree that no one can become a member of Christ’s church without baptism. But let it be ever remembered that the act we submit to for baptism must be **baptism**, i. e., must be the act which Christ commands, and it must be administered to us by the body he authorizes alone to administer it—one of his local churches; an organization not a church, though all its members were Christians, has no authority to administer the ordinances of Christ’s house. Then as we would obey Christ, by observing his Supper, by uniting with his church, by confessing him as our Savior, by professing our hearty allegiance, it devolves upon us to be baptized as he was and as he commands us to be. It must be true that every true child of God has the

mind and spirit of Christ, which was the spirit of **exact obedience**, and desires to know what that act is: and it is for such I write.

Why there is to-day the least doubt in the minds of the people about the appointed and primitive act, is—1. Because both the primitive **act** and **design** have been changed by the Romish church and the change adopted by Protestants to suit the tastes, feelings and convenience of the people; 2. Because the word Christ used to designate the act is not translated in our commonly received version; 3. Because other words used to describe the act are untranslated; and 4. Because there are large and influential denominations that teach that the word Christ selected is a word of generic signification, and denotes several different and even opposite acts; as to **pour** upon, to **sprinkle** upon a part of the body, and to **immerse** the whole body in water, and that we are at liberty to use any one of these. The flesh of course selects the one most convenient and popular, and for these reasons the primitive act is practically rejected.

It has been less than three hundred years past that there has been any serious doubt raised as to the act Christ commanded; and, indeed, among the best scholars of all denominations, there is no doubt entertained now, because, for thirteen hundred years, the primitive act was generally observed by all professed Christians. The real question among scholars and theologians since the days of Calvin has been, if a **modified** form of baptism, one more convenient and better suited to the refined feelings of the people will not answer just as well, and if the church has not the authority to change rites and ceremonies, so that the substance is retained? The thoughtful and reverent Christian can not believe that Christ empowered his churches to contravene his positive laws, or modify in the least his appointments. Moreover, the **form** is the substance of the ceremony, and the design of a rite determines its form, and one can not be changed without affecting the other, and the change vitiates the ordinance.

I again emphasize the fact that since Christ has not authorized his churches to modify in the least any one of his appointments, that unless we are baptized as Christ our great exemplar was, and commands us to be, we are not baptized at all, and we can not partake of his Supper without profaning the feast, and bring upon ourselves his condemnation.

Let it not, then, be said or thought that Christian baptism is a matter of little or no importance—that it is “a mere form” and “a non-essential.” While not essential to our salvation, since we must be conscious of this before we are baptized, still it is essential to our obedience to Christ; it is essential to our acceptable worship of him; for he tells us this, “*In vain do they worship me who teach for doctrines the commandments of men,*” *i. e.*, the modified form, design, and subjects of baptism; it is essential to the maintenance and perpetuation of his truth; essential as an act of honor to him our head; and it is quite essential as a test of the real state of our deceitful hearts and spiritual relation to him.

The importance of scriptural baptism is thus set forth by one of our most forcible writers in his Tract on the “Position of Baptism in the Christian System.”

“1. It is a **fact**, that baptism was the initial of the ministry of Jesus Christ. 2. It is a **fact**, that he closed his ministry as he began it,—with baptism. 3. It is a **fact**, that the record of his last conversation on earth shows specific mention of this duty and of no other. 4. It is a **fact**, that this is the only duty which we are required to perform in the name of the Trinity. 5. It is a **fact**, that once only was Godhead displayed to earth in triune character, and that this was done on the occasion of baptism. 6. It is a **fact**, that baptism is classed in the Scriptures with things of most tremendous import and of infinite dignity. 7. It is a **fact**, that the baptism of Christ was essential to the fulfillment of all righteousness. 8. It is a **fact**, that baptism is the only duty of which one single moment in the life of an immortal being has a monopoly.”—*Dr. H. H. Tucker.*