

CHAPTER I.

VALID BAPTISM VERSUS ALIEN IMMERSION.

DEFINITIONS.

In order to a correct understanding of any question, we should have a definite understanding of the meaning of all terms employed, and positions assumed. By the term "Alien Immersion" is meant immersions performed outside of Baptist churches, by persons who are in no way connected with them. It is commonly understood to refer to immersions performed by Pedobaptists and Campbellites. The question of divergence is, whether Baptist churches should recognize such immersions as valid baptisms, and receive members thus immersed into their churches, without immersing them again. There will be found among Baptists certain persons who take either side of this question. It will be the purpose of these pages, if possible, to determine the attitude which the denomination has occupied on this point in the past. The whole question turns upon the authority of the administrator. Those who believe in the reception of alien immersion, hold that the character of the administrator has nothing to do with the validity of baptism. They hold that if we have a proper subject—a true believer in Jesus Christ—a right design—to obey God, and symbolize our death to sin and resurrection to a new life—and a proper action—the total immersion of the body in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that we have a gospel or valid baptism, it matters not what may be the character of the administrator. On the other hand,

those who oppose the reception of Alien immersion, hold that in addition to the three qualifications stated above, to have valid or gospel baptism, there must be a legal administrator—one authorized by a gospel (Baptist) church. Of the former there are two classes. The one insists on receiving alien immersion at all times and without restraint; while the other class believes it is valid, but “opposes the reception of it on the principles of good order.” Of the latter there are also two classes; the one believes we should have direct church action in each particular case; while the other class believes that it is sufficient when the church confers her authority upon the minister in his ordination. The whole thing turns, however, upon the question of church authority. The question may be stated thus: All Baptists are agreed as to the subject, design and action of baptism. But when they come to the administrator they reach the point of divergence.

The question, we think, is sufficiently clear now that we may proceed to look after its history. Perhaps this would be a good place to state, that the rejection of alien immersion is a Baptist peculiarity. Even the Roman Catholics, with all their proscriptive and persecuting arrogance, have ever received, the baptism of heretics (as they are pleased to call all who differ from them). If for any cause they rebaptize one, they give what they call “conditional baptism,” employing this ceremony: “If thou art not baptized, I baptize thee,” etc. Protestant denominations, as a rule, have always received baptism from the hands of others. It is true that in their general meetings they have at times discussed the propriety of

receiving baptisms performed by Catholics. But they have usually given indefinite decisions in the matter, with the understanding that if they invalidated Catholic baptism, they invalidated their own, since they received their baptism from the Catholics. It is true also that John Wesley rebaptized Dissenters in order to get Catholic, or Episcopal authority, for their baptism. These are isolated cases, however, and as a rule the statement holds good, that it is peculiarly a Baptist practice.

THE BIBLE.

The history of this question has its beginning with God himself. When God would begin the ordinance of baptism, he began it by emphasizing the administrator-in sending a man direct from God. John 1:6. The administrator was further emphasized by Christ. When the time came for him to be baptized, he did not say the administrator is non-essential, and therefore seek baptism at the hands of some Rabbi, or Priest, in his own town (Nazareth), but walked sixty miles to get baptism at the hands of a Baptist preacher-the heaven-sent legal administrator. (See Mark 1:9; John 1:33.) Christ further emphasized the administrator when he raised the question as to whether “John’s baptism was from Heaven, or of men.” Matt. 21:25. And he still further emphasized the administrator when he told the “Pharisees and lawyers that they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of John.” Luke 7:30.

The administrator is still again emphasized in that those baptized by Christ's disciples are said to be baptized by Christ himself. John 3:22 and 4:1-2. Just as the State hangs a criminal through the sheriff-their legal agent-so Christ baptized through the disciples, his legal administrators. Such could never be said of one hanged by a mob; it matters not how guilty the one lynched might be. Just so no one could be said to be baptized by Christ unless baptized by one commissioned by Him.