

**THE MOULD OF DOCTRINE: A STUDY
OF ROMANS VI. 17: AS A BEARING
ON THE MEANING AND VALUE OF
THE SPECIFIC FORM OF BAPTISM, AS
APPOINTED BY OUR LORD**

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The mould of doctrine: a study of Romans VI. 17: as a bearing on the meaning and value of the specific form of baptism, as appointed by our Lord by Jesse B. Thomas

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JESSE B. THOMAS

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MARGARET L. LECHANE

THE MOULD OF DOCTRINE.

A STUDY OF

ROMANS VI. 17,

AS BEARING ON THE MEANING AND VALUE OF THE SPECIFIC
FORM OF BAPTISM, AS APPOINTED BY OUR LORD.

BY

JESSE B. THOMAS, D. D.,

Pastor of the First Baptist Church in Pierrepont St., Brooklyn, N. Y.



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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE BAPTISTS AND THE BIBLE.....	5
Fidelity or Stubbornness—Which? 8—The Charge of Ritualism, 12—The Specific Case Considered, 13—The Question of Catholicity, 17—The War About a Word, 21.	
CHAPTER II.	
BAPTISM THE MOULD OF DOCTRINE.....	23
A Tendency to Guard Against, 24—What the "Mould" Signifies, 27—How Theories Sometimes Grow, 30—A Curious Hypothesis, 33—Applying the Survival Theory, 34.	
CHAPTER III.	
BAPTISM, THE RESURRECTION, AND HISTORIC CHRISTIANITY.....	40
Things to be Explained, 43—Baptism and the Resurrection, 46—Baptism a Historic Witness, 49.	
CHAPTER IV.	
BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH.—MODERN THEORIES	57
The First Great Question, Does Baptism Regenerate? 57—The Second Great Question, Does Baptism Symbolize Regeneration? 69.	
CHAPTER V.	
BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH.—THE APOSTOLIC IDEA.....	73
Analogy of Roman to Jewish Beliefs, 76—Paul Against these Beliefs, 78—The Central Truth of Christianity, 82—Baptism Not a Purification, 85.	

CHAPTER VI.

- BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH—PERVERSIONS AND THEIR SOURCES..... 90
 The Symbolism of the Ordinances, 91—What Does Infant Baptism Mean? 94—How Sprinkling is Defended, 98—An Enormous Contradiction, 101—How Infant Baptism Arose, 104.

CHAPTER VII.

- BAPTISM AND THE NEW BIRTH—RESULTS OF PER-
 VERSION..... 101
 Unitarianism and its Origin, 113—Luther's Great Inconsistency, 115—Spiritual Baptism and the New Birth, 119—Evolution Fallacies Anticipated, 122.

CHAPTER VIII.

- BAPTISM AND LOYALTY—THE HISTORIC IDEA..... 127
 Luther's Prophecy Historically Realized, 132—Freedom, Civil and Intellectual, Demanded, 135—The Anabaptists and this Demand, 139—Reformers of the Reformation, 141.

CHAPTER IX.

- BAPTISM AND LOYALTY—DERASING THE STANDARDS 147
 A Remnant of Rome, 151—First, The Revision of Formularies, 153—Second, The Warping of Interpretation, 158—Some Illustrative Instances, 160.

CHAPTER X.

- BAPTISM AND LOYALTY—THE ULTIMATE ISSUE..... 168
 First, The Parable of the Disobedient Son, 171—Second, The Parable of the Rebellious Tenants, 175—Third, The Parable of the Contemptuous Servants, 176—Baptism the Test of Loyalty, 181—A Linguistic Agnosticism, 182—The Witnessing Word, 188.

THE MOULD OF DOCTRINE.

CHAPTER I.

THE BAPTISTS AND THE BIBLE.

IN the *Autobiography* of Dr. Lyman Beecher (vol. ii., p. 87), in a letter addressed by him to his son Edward, then preparing for the Congregational ministry, occurs this curious passage: "There is only one thing which you will have to watch and pray against; that is the morbid sensibility of what may be termed a nervous conscience; by which I mean a conscience made preternaturally sensitive and fearful. This I have reason to believe has worried many a man till he became a Baptist through excess of conscience." So wholesome a recoil did this paternal caution produce from "excess of conscience," that not only did the young student abandon his growing Baptist predilections, but no one of Dr. Beecher's household has ever since been driven thus by conscience into the Baptist ranks.

The notion here insinuated, that Baptist con-

scientiousness is at bottom only scrupulosity, highly flavored with obstinacy, is not unusual, and perhaps under all the circumstances not unnatural, in the casual observer. The skillful partisan knows how to seize an apt point of circumstance, to present an imposing front by marshalling his meagre facts into a battle-line long though thin, and so to win by impression rather than by measuring weapons. In the court of prejudice the brilliancy of the indictment is accepted as conclusive of the facts, and judicial inquiry is dispensed with.

Such an opportunity has been afforded, and abundantly improved, in the recent dealings between the Baptists and the American Bible Society. Consider how formidable a case may be made by the bare statement of a few facts, with plausible inferences therefrom, viz.:

1. The real question at issue is the translation of a single word, and that in a single sense—the Bible Society being willing to translate the Greek word by a “generic” term, or to transfer it untranslated.—Did ever “jot and tittle” breed so great a controversy before?

2. Because the Society will not concede this point, the Baptists alone of all the co-operating denominations withdraw. — What a wanton breach of the “Unity of Christendom,” because

an unsectarian Society will not violate its organic and fundamental principle!

About these two main positions now deploy a skirmish line of supplementary suggestions, such as:

3. The Baptists cling tenaciously to immersion as the only baptism.—How absurd to obstruct the coming reign of “sweetness and light” by thus superstitiously exalting the “letter” above the “spirit” of the ordinance!

4. The Baptists stand almost alone “against the Western world” in this.—How presumptuous in them to condemn the ancient church by rejecting infant baptism! How arrogant to reflect upon the present church by their “close communion” doctrine!

5. The Baptists, as known in history, have somehow been pretty uniformly “in the opposition.”—This seems to suggest some inherent waywardness of temper, or obliquity of doctrine, tending to the theory that the only way to “please God” is to be “contrary to all men.”

Probably the above counts would be regarded by the most rancid anti-Baptist as sufficiently vigorous and comprehensive to present the case in its strongest features, (and perhaps in his judgment to close it in the opening.) But patient examination will often show how a statement