

According to the definition given above, baptism is a washing with water. By washing is meant any such application of water to the body as effects its purification. This may be done by immersion, affusion, or sprinkling. The command, therefore, to baptize is simply a command to wash with water. It is not specifically a command to immerse, to affuse, or to sprinkle. The mode of applying water as the purifying medium is unessential. The only necessary thing is to make such an application of water to the person, as shall render the act significant of the purification of the soul."

-- Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, Volume II (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1952), p. 526.

"Baptism is the immersion in water, by a proper administrator, of a believer in Christ, into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Immersion is so exclusively the baptismal act that without it there is no baptism; and a believer in Christ is so exclusively the subject of baptism that without such a subject there is no baptism . . .

Now if these views of the symbolic import of baptism are correct, it follows inevitably that the immersion in water of a believer in Christ is essential to baptism -- so essential that there can be no baptism without it. If baptism represents the burial and resurrection of Christ, it must be immersion. If it sets forth in emblem the believer's death to sin and resurrection to a new life, it must be immersion. If it in symbol remits and washes away the sins which Christ has really washed away in his blood, still it must be immersion. If it anticipates the resurrection, nothing but immersion justifies the anticipation. We are 'buried by baptism' -- that is, by means of baptism. When the baptismal process takes place there is certainly a burial. The two are inseparable, and therefore where there is no burial there is no baptism."

-- James Madison Pendleton, *Christian Doctrines* (American Baptist Publication Society, 1878, reprinted by The Judson Press, 1954), pp. 340, 350-351.

"We must distinguish between the thing itself and its mode . . . The administration, dispensation, presentation, and reception of the Sacraments are essential, nor do they allow of any exception; but the mode of the administration and reception admits of some liberty and variation. A few examples will render it more plain. In Baptism, it is absolutely necessary that a person should be baptized with water, i.e., washed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but it is no matter whether this ablution be performed by immersion into water or by affusion with water."

-- John Gerhard, *Loci Theologici* Volume VIII, p. 240, quoted by Heinrich Schmid, p. 531.