# In Defense of Infant baptism

### By Rev. John Scott Johnson, Ph.D.

**PART l.   AFFUSlON (Sprinkling)**

Are we not impressed with the simplicity of the Bible accounts of water baptism? Physical preparation for baptism was recorded only once: that of Saul of Tarsus. He was told to “arise and be baptized” (Acts 22:16), and he “arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). That is the whole record of the ceremony.

There is no suggestion nor intimation anywhere in the Bible that clothing had to be changed, nor of any inconvenience of wet garments (even out on the desert road to Gaza). In a jail, about the Jordan, around the house in Jerusalem containing the upper chamber, in the home of Cornelius, by a river’s brink in Philippi, out on a desert road—whenever and wherever water baptism was needed, it was administered without delay and with no hubbub, no commotion. Does not this fact argue strongly as to the simplicity of the ceremony? Does not the cumbersomeness and unwieldiness of immersion seem utterly repugnant to, and out of keeping with, the simplicity of the record?

It is no accident that the verb “sprinkle” (in various forms) occurs 41 times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and six times in Hebrews. “Immerse” never occurs in the Bible in any of its forms.

**SEC. 1. THE BIBLE’S PRESCRIBED MODE**

God has not left us in doubt as to His intended mode of baptism. Heb. 9:10 speaks of “divers washings” (Greek: *baptismois*, “baptisms”) which the whole 9th chapter of Hebrews identifies as they can be no other than the sprinklings of blood and water which are commanded in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. The following quotations prove this:

1. Hebrews 9:13: “The ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean.” The reference is to Numbers 19:17-18: “For an unclean person, they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer...and running water...and a clean person shall . . .sprinkle it upon the persons.” 2. “Moses...sprinkled both the book and all the people”—Heb. 9:19. References: Exodus 24:6, 8: “Moses took...the blood...and...sprinkled on the altar...sprinkled it on the people.” 3. “He sprinkled with blood...the tabernacle”—Heb. 9:21. References: Lev. 8:19: “Moses sprinkled the blood upon the altar”; Lev. 16:14: “He shall take of the blood...and sprinkle it...upon the mercy seat...and before the mercy seat.”

Since these “sprinklings” of the Old Testament are called “baptisms” in the Greek of Hebrews 9:10, God has Himself prescribed how He wishes baptisms to be performed: by sprinkling. It makes no difference what the classical definitions of *baptizo* may be; what Bible students want to know is: “How does the Bible define it, and does Bible usage confirm this definition?” Abundant confirmation in Bible usage of the definition of *baptizo* in Hebrews 9:10 may be found in the Bible. As illustrations, let us look first at some synonyms of baptism and then at some examples of water baptism, all, of course, taken from the Bible.

**a. Synonyms**

The Bible identifies water baptism with ceremonial purifying or cleansing with water. The New Testament uses water baptism and ceremonial purifying or cleansing with water in such close connection that their identity cannot be questioned.

The following quotations prove this: John 3:23-26: “John also was baptizing in Aenon...there arose a question...about purifying...He that was with thee beyond Jordan...baptizeth.” Mark 7:3, 4: “The Jews, except they wash (same in the Greek)...eat not...except they wash (Greek: ‘baptize’—A. S. V. margin), they eat not.”

The following quotations (out of many) show how sprinkling was used in the Old Testament for cleansing or purifying: Leviticus 14:49-51: “To cleanse the house...sprinkle the house.” Num. 8:7: “to cleanse them, sprinkle water of purifying upon them.” The whole 19th chapter of Numbers deals with the preparation and use (by sprinkling) of the water of purification. This ceremonial cleansing or purifying was always and invariably by sprinkling.

**Mark 7:4**

Mark 7:4 is very illuminating. In part it reads: “When they come from the market, except they wash (baptize), they eat not. And...they...hold...the washing (baptizing) of cups and pots, brazen vessels and of tables (or couches).” This ceremonial cleansing of people after a trip to the market, and of tables (or couches), is called baptizing in the Greek (see the margin of the A. S. V.). This was performed by sprinkling, as shown by Numbers 19:18: “A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water and sprinkle it upon the tent and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons.”

If Numbers 19:18 and similar practices were not the forerunner of Mark 7:4, where did such baptizing originate? How else can their existence as a Jewish custom be explained? This sprinkling of water, called baptism in Hebrews 9:10 as well as in Mark 7:4, proves that the Bible mode of baptism was sprinkling. The margin of Mark 7:4 in the American Standard Revision records: “Some ancient authorities read ‘sprinkle themselves’” instead of baptize themselves. When some ancient copyists substituted “sprinkle” for “baptize,” they showed the identity in mode of the two words. How did such a variation occur? Perhaps a copyist, to avoid using in other connection a word (“baptize”) that had been devoted to a sacred use, substituted its synonym, “sprinkle.” But whatever the explanation, the variation shows the similarity (if not the identity) of the two words in Bible usage.

The very scholarly and instructive book on baptism entitled *The Riddle Solved* by Rev. Chalmers Kilbourn, A.M., relates on pages 22 and 23 the fact that the Greek manuscripts are about equally divided in their use of two Greek words in Mark 7:4—*baptizo* (to cleanse) and *rantizo* (to sprinkle)—some using *baptizo* (expressive of ceremonial or symbolic washing) and others *rantizo* (expressive of the mode of washing). Mr. Kilbourn adds: “These ritual cleansings are called baptizings, and the mode of performing such ablutions is sprinkling.”

**b. Examples  
JOHN’S BAPTISM**

John was a Jew. He was baptizing Jews—a nation intensely scrupulous and zealous about the letter of the law and the things thereunto appertaining. The Jews identified water baptism with ceremonial purifying, as has been shown. Suppose John had attempted to introduce something absolutely unknown to the law (for instance, immersion). Would he not have given his authority for it? Without some such showing that was sufficient, these scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees—always jealous of each another’s popularity—would have hounded John as later they hounded Paul, especially when John used of them such an offensive phrases as “generation of vipers”—Matt. 3:7. The worst they could say of him was: “He hath a devil”—Matt. 11:18.

Matthew (3:3), Mark (1:3), and Luke (3:4) all refer to John as one whose coming had been foretold in the Old Testament: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight.” Ezekiel 36:25 (see this subheading in Section II) foretold the sprinkling of water to cleanse. (There is no foretelling of any immersion of anybody.) God has always been particular and precise in prescribing the procedure He wanted practiced. In view of these facts, is it thinkable that God would ignore the procedure He had prescribed, and have His predicted messenger practice something (immersion) foreign to the whole Old Testament, and without a word of explanation as to why he should cleanse the people in that unprecedented, unprescribed, unbiblical way?

“John bare record” in John 1:33 of a new revelation disclosing the Messiah: “He that sent me to baptize with water...said unto me: Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining on Him...is He that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.” John claimed no new revelation about his baptism, and since there was no protest against his mode of purifying the people, there is only one conclusion possible: he was acting in accordance with the law and prophecy; he was baptizing the people by sprinkling them with clean water.

**Immersion Was Not a Jewish Practice**

There is no assured evidence available that John, or any other Jew of that time, knew anything of immersion as a Bible rite. It is stated that Jews in those days immersed proselytes, but this statement lacks historical proof. God told Moses how to receive proselytes (it was by circumcision: “When a stranger...will keep the passover...let all his males be circumcised”—Ex. 12:48), and there is no adequate historical evidence that the Jews in Christ’s time added anything to God’s directions.

If sufficient evidence ever appears that the Essenes (it is held that they immersed) or any other body of Jews practiced such an anomaly as immersion (such a repudiation of every Bible command and example relating to purifying), it would show only how far the chosen people had retrograded, had fallen away from obedience to God. It would not prove that John, “filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb” (Luke 1:15), followed a procedure so entirely without Bible precedent, and with not a word of explanation or justification. He alleged no revelation calling for such a departure from all the related commands and practices of the Old Testament.

But if John was ever guilty of such an irregularity, and if he was able to “put across” to the Pharisees and Sadducees such an oddity and “get by” with it without so much as a questioning, it is unthinkable that the Lord Jesus, the Jehovah of the Old Testament, in fulfilling “all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15)—which is obedience to law—would have submitted to a proceeding which was not commanded, was not prefigured, and utterly disregarded His own detailed instructions to Moses. Immersion is foreign to Bible usage, and is not in the Bible picture anywhere.

**Can John Be the Messiah?**

Moreover, they were expecting their Messiah, and they actually thought John was he. Why? Did not Isaiah say of the Messiah, “He shall sprinkle many nations” (Isa. 52:15)? John was preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins and must have been sprinkling clean water upon the people. This seemed a fulfillment not only of Isaiah (just quoted) but also of Ezekiel 36:25, 26: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall he clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you and a new Spirit will I put within you.” Was it not to this latter part that John referred in Matthew 3:11: “He (the Messiah) shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit”? And was not John fulfilling the former part?

We can thus understand the questioning by the messengers from the Pharisees in John 1:19-25, winding up with the amazed demand in the 25th verse: “Why then baptizest thou?” If John had been immersing people (of which Jewish law and prophecy said absolutely nothing), the questioning by these messengers would he unaccountable. **No immersion of anybody had been predicted.** Since they were expecting their Messiah—sprinkling the people with clean water—it was natural to join the two things together.

**“Was It from Heaven or of Men?”**

The Lord asked this question about John’s baptism (Luke 20:4). If of men, it may have been of men’s devising; it may have been by immersion. But if it was from heaven (as we know it was), it followed God’s plan—typically in many parts of the Old Testament, and assuredly in prophecy in Ezekiel 36:25 (“I will sprinkle water upon you”). The verses following Ezekiel 36:25 speak of the baptism with the Holy Spirit and the effect thereof. There is no mistaking a fulfillment at Pentecost of the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:37 (“I will put my Spirit within you”). Since water baptism was and is the type of baptism with the Holy Spirit (see Section II hereof, “The Holy Spirit and Water”), verse 25 (“I will sprinkle clean water upon you,” this coming just before “I will put my Spirit within you,” a statement which had fulfillment at Pentecost) must have had some fulfillment just before Pentecost. Could it have been, in Bible history, other than John’s baptism? Then John’s mode of baptism must have been that set forth in verse 25: sprinkling. “The baptism of John, was it from heaven or of men?”

**2. BAPTISM OF THE LORD JESUS**

Reference has been made to the fact that a Jew, fulfilling law and prophecy, in baptizing Jews, would of course have complied with the Old Testament requirements. No other argument should be needed to assure Bible students that John, a Jew, in baptizing the Lord Jesus, also a Jew, did it in the only way known to law and prophecy—by sprinkling. The Lord Jesus (the Jehovah of the Old Testament) had given the directions to Moses, and we may be sure He complied with His own detailed and repeated command about sprinkling.

Since our Lord was about to enter upon His priestly ministry, not being of Levi, the priestly tribe, He would “fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:16) by obedience to His instructions (as the Jehovah of the O.T.) to Moses for the setting apart of the Levites to their special office. These are found in Numbers 8:7: “Sprinkle water of purifying upon them.”

The Levites began their ministry at “thirty years old” (Num. 4:23, 30, 35); and the Holy Spirit has preserved for us this detail in our Lord’s life: just after His baptism, “about 30 years of age” (Luke 3:23).

Aaron and his sons were also anointed with oil (typical of the Holy Spirit). “Moses took of the anointing oil...and sprinkled it upon Aaron...and upon his sons”—Lev. 8:30. So “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost” (not with the type but with the reality, Acts 10:38).

The whole original ceremony was done by sprinkling. Would the Lord Jesus have permitted a new method with absolutely no instructions about it?

**3. OTHER BAPTISMS WITH WATER**

To avoid unduly enlarging this booklet, other Bible baptisms with water will not be taken up in detail. But whenever circumstances are given in the Bible, they all confirm sprinkling as the mode (unless it be the misleading translation “much water,” which will be considered later—see Section V).

For instance, the baptism of the eunuch was on a “desert” road (Acts 8:26). The Philippian jailer and his family were baptized in the jail in the middle of the night (“midnight”—Acts 16:25; “the same hour of the night”—Acts 16:33).

Saul of Tarsus was baptized standing up after three days without food or water, and before food was given him. (Acts 9:9: “He was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.” Acts 22:16: “Arise and be baptized”—the command; the response: he “arose and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened”—Acts 9:18, 19.)

No adequate facilities for immersing 3,000 at Pentecost (Acts 2:41) were available, and no mention was made of any difficulty connected with their baptism. See also the first two paragraphs hereof.

**What It All Means**

Do not the synonyms of baptism and the Bible examples of water baptism all verify sprinkling as the Bible mode of baptism?

Since ceremonial purifying or cleansing with water was invariably done in one way in the Old Testament—by sprinkling—any change of that mode in the New Testament for the same ceremony would surely be described and explained. There is no suggestion nor intimation anywhere in the New Testament of any command to change the mode. Then there is no escape from the conclusion that a ceremony which was not changed in its character, its nature, nor its signification as it passed from one dispensation to another, could not have been changed in its mode in silence; it must still be by sprinkling.

**SEC. II. THE HOLY SPIRIT AND WATER**

The Holy Spirit was essential in both the teachings and the transactions of the whole Bible. While He was not as prominent in the Old Testament as in the New, He was there. The following quotations are a few of the many that might be made:

“My Spirit shall not always strive with man”—Gen. 6:3. “The Spirit of the Lord came upon David”—I Sam. 16:13. “The Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul”—I Sam. 16:14.

**Circumcision: Flesh, Heart**

Under the old dispensation, circumcision of the flesh was the sign, seal, and token of the covenant with God. “Ye shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin...a token of the covenant”—Gen. 17:11. “The sign of circumcision, a seal”—Rom. 4:l1.

Circumcision of the flesh was a type of but not a substitute for circumcision of the heart, as shown below. The latter (the anti-type) was not possible as a human act, but was done by the Holy Spirit.

“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart”—Jer. 4:4. “All the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart”—Jer. 9:26. “Strangers, uncircumcised in heart, and uncircumcised in flesh”—Ezek. 44:7. “Circumcision is that of the heart”—Rom. 2:29. “The circumcision made without hands”—Col. 2:11.

**Circumcision and Baptism**

Circumcision of the flesh has been discontinued. “Is any called in uncircumcision? Let him not be circumcised”—I Cor. 7:18. “If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing”—Gal. 5:2. That baptism replaced circumcision is proved by the following considerations:

1. Their purpose was the same: to indicate sharers in the covenant. Both were used to receive church members. “This is my covenant...Every man child among you shall be circumcised”—Gen. 17:10. “They...were baptized; and the same day there were added...three thousand”—Acts 2:41.

2. Their symbolic teaching is the same: the need of cleansing the flesh.

3. Both represent the Spirit’s work. “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart”—Deut. 30:6. Similarly, water baptism typifies the Spirit’s baptism. See “Water Baptism—a Type,” below.

4. Circumcision of the flesh (the type) was man’s work; circumcision of the heart (the anti-type), the Spirit’s work. So with water baptism (the type) and the Holy Spirit’s baptism (the anti-type).

5. Their prerequisite is the same: faith. “Circumcision, a seal of...faith”—Rom. 4:11. “When they believed...they were baptized”—Acts 8:12.

6. The covenant still continues: “An everlasting covenant”—Gen. 17:7. “Ye are the children of the covenant which God made with...Abraham”—Acts 3:25.

7. The great commission specifies baptism, not circumcision. “Baptizing them”—Matt. 28:19. It is clear, then, that God has put baptism into the place of circumcision as the sign, the seal, the token of the covenant with Him.

**The Occasion of the First General Assembly**

It is urged that if baptism displaced circumcision, saying so would have ended the discussion in Acts 15. But the controversy was not as to how to receive church members, but whether circumcision was necessary to salvation. “Certain men...said: Except ye be circumcised...ye cannot be saved”—Acts 15:1.

**Water Baptism: A Type**

In addition to oil, water was a type of the Holy Spirit: “rivers of living water. But this spake He of the Spirit”—John 7:38, 39. In giving a type of the baptism with the Holy Spirit, God used the familiar water baptism. Again and again, in connection with water baptism, the baptism with the Holy Spirit is mentioned. The instances given below are not intended to be exhaustive of the times God has associated together in His Word these two baptisms. (“What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder”—Mark 10:9.)

**Instances**

Matthew (3:11), Mark (1:8), and Luke (3:16) all record John as saying, “I baptize you with water...He shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit.” Our Lord confirmed that in Acts 1:5: “John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.” This statement was quoted by Peter in Acts 11:16. At Pentecost, Peter answered inquirers: “Be baptized...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”—Acts 2:38.

When the Holy Spirit “fell on” Cornelius and his company, and the Jews had recovered from their amazement that “on the Gentiles was poured out the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:45), Peter directed that they who had “received the Holy Spirit as well as we,” be baptized with water (Acts 10:47, 48). Acts 8:15, 16 shows that the baptism with the Holy Spirit was associated in the minds of the apostles with the baptism with water: “the Holy Spirit...was fallen upon me...only they were baptized.” Acts 19:1-5 tells the same story.

**Mode of the Two Baptisms Must Be Similar**

As the immediately preceding paragraphs clearly show to any fair-minded, unprejudiced student, water baptism is a type of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. The baptism with the Holy Spirit cannot be an immersion (the eight or nine terms used in the Old and New Testaments to express this baptism—poured out, fell on, came upon, descending upon, received, put within, sprinkling of the blood, etc.—each and all positively excluded immersion). Its analogy to its type, water baptism, not only repudiates the idea of immersion as the mode of water baptism but it is a confirmation of the mode: sprinkling or pouring, which is the teaching of the whole Bible.

In spite of the many times a reader of the Bible will read of water baptism and the Holy Spirit’s baptism in the same breath, an immersionist objected to connecting the two because the Bible does not specify that they are related. Yet that same immersionist will swallow the doctrine of “buried by water baptism” “bait, hook and sinker”—although the expression “buried by/in baptism” occurs only twice in the whole Bible, and both of these passages omit the word “water” and contain expressions and truths that arc simply outraged by lugging in the idea of water baptism (see Section VI, herein).

If water baptism is not the type of the Holy Spirit’s baptism, then God has given us a type for which there is no anti-type, and an anti-type for which there is no type. Immersionists contend that “buried with him by baptism into death” supplies the anti-type of water baptism as the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. But immersion has no resemblance to the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord, as they were accomplished 1900 years ago (see Section VI hereof).

**No Argument in the Length of Big Words**

This matter has been dealt with at such length partly because of a statement in an immersionist tract that “the belief that baptism (with water) portrays the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is exegetically, philologically, and historically without foundation” (“The New Testament Message in Baptism” by Rufus W. Weaver, D.D., page 10). This quotation is an illustration of two things: 1. The illogical reasoning of the whole immersion scheme; 2. The desperate situation of those immersionists who recognize the inescapable bearing of the mode of baptism with the Holy Spirit upon the mode of baptism with water, if the two are in any wise related. That they are related, and closely related, cannot (and will not) be questioned by any one who will accept the necessary implications of the Bible parallelism.

**Ezekiel 36:25**

“Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.”

To overcome the deadly accuracy and detail with which this verse forestalls clumsy and unscriptural immersion, and predicts the displacement of circumcision by water baptism, some immersionists contend that it is merely a prediction of something to become a reality to the Jews in the future.

Its setting certainly is Jewish. The 36th and 37th chapters of Ezekiel give a wonderful picture of the reclamation of Israel. But, like many prophecies of the Old Testament, these prophecies have more than one fulfillment or application.

Ezekiel 37:11-14 interpret Ezekiel 37:1-10 as applying to the resurrection of Israel (yet future), but that fact does not prevent these verses from being a marvelous picture of the resurrection of a dead soul, such as we are privileged to see again and again when the Holy Spirit uses the preaching of the Word today (as at Pentecost), and new creatures in Christ are made.

So Ezekiel 36:25-31 surely have in them a glorious promise of some blessings yet before Israel. But they are also a glorious promise to those who receive the Lord Jesus as Savior and who, therefore, experience conversion. The attendant circumstances pictured in these verses are precisely the gracious experiences of those who are born anew by the Holy Spirit.

To show that fulfillment of this prophecy is not confined to the Jews, compare two promises in verse 28 with some New Testament parallels:

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| “Ye shall be my people, and I will be your God”—Ezek. 36:28. | “I will be their God, and they shall be my people”—II Cor. 6:16.  “I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people”—Heb. 8:10.  “Men...shall be his people, and God himself shall be...their God”—Rev. 21:3. |

**Baptism (Water and Holy Spirit) Predicted and Fulfilled**

To prove that Ezekiel 36:25-27 is fulfilled in every case of a new birth in this age of the Holy Spirit, we have only to put them alongside some verses in the New Testament. In this parallelism, there is seen also the detailed accuracy with which the Holy Spirit predicted John’s baptism, and Pentecost.

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| “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes and ye shall keep my judgments and do them”—Ezek. 36:25-27. | “John baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit”—Acts 1:5; 11:16.  “Be baptized...and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”—Acts 2:38.  “Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Spirit?”—Acts 10:47.  “I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them”—Heb. 10:16.  “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...that we should walk in them”—Eph. 2:10. |

God’s promises in Ezekiel 36:25, 27 (“will sprinkle clean water,” “will put my Spirit”) were assuredly fulfilled when John baptized by sprinkling with water most of the Jews in Palestine, and when the Holy Spirit fell upon the 3120 at Pentecost (3000 of whom were baptized with water the same day), and have continued to be fulfilled during the ages since when baptizing with water has been followed (or preceded) by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

**Water Baptism Must Be by Sprinkling**

In view of the parallelism as shown above of Ezekiel 36:25-27 with passages taken from the New Testament, is it thinkable that God would have failed to give some clear and definite directions for the ordinance of baptism if it was to be different from all the related types in the Old Testament, and different from the unmistakably related prophecy of Ezekiel 36:25 (“I will sprinkle clean water upon you”)?

In an endeavor to escape from their confusion, some immersionists contend, as already mentioned, that Ezekiel 36 refers to a future age and that its directions are not for us. Would God baptize the Gentiles (as He has done) with the Holy Spirit identically as He will baptize the reclaimed Jews with the Holy Spirit, yet use a different method in the baptism of Gentiles with water, and without a word of direction anywhere as to such variation? (“God is not the author of confusion”—I Cor. 14:33.) Since the agreement and harmony of the passages quoted above in parallel columns prove their oneness in God’s program, they prove also just as surely that as “I will put my Spirit within you” (Ezek. 36:27) is fulfilled in the baptism with the Holy Spirit, so “I will sprinkle clean water upon you” (Ezek. 36:25) is fulfilled in the baptism with water.

**SEC. III. SPRINKLING IN TYPES, REALITIES, SYMBOLS**

Attention has been called to the fact that neither the word “immerse” nor any of its derivatives occurs anywhere in the Bible, while the word “sprinkle” in its various forms appears 41 times in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and six times in Hebrews. It appears elsewhere also, but it is because of its typical character in these four books that mention is made of occurrences there.

Both blood and water were sprinkled as types of New Testament realities. One quotation of each (out of many that might be given) will be made. “He shall sprinkle [the blood] upon him that is to be cleansed”—Lev. 14:7. “A clean person shall take hyssop and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon...the persons”—Num. 19:18. In this case, prepared water was sprinkled for purification. In the New Testament dispensation, the blood is still sprinkled, as the following quotations will show: “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience”—Heb. 10:22; “the blood of sprinkling”—Heb. 12:24; “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”—I Pet. 1:2.

**Argument from Analogy**

It is the Holy Spirit who applies by sprinkling the cleansing, purifying blood to the sinful soul: “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 1:2). This work of the Holy Spirit was symbolized by the baptism with water, as shown in Section II, “The Holy Spirit and Water.” Then the water, too, must have been sprinkled in the New Testament baptism, to conform to the mode of application of the real purifier, the blood of the Lamb of God (see the references in the preceding paragraph).

**Argument from Presumption**

Since the blood was applied the same way (sprinkled) in both the Old and the New Testament dispensations, the presumption is that the water applied by sprinkling in the Old Testament dispensation would be applied the same way in the New Testament dispensation, unless there were clear and definite instructions to the contrary (and there are none). This presumption is made stronger by the fact that the water symbolizes the blood in both Old and New Testaments (see preceding paragraphs). If a change in the mode of application of the water had been intended in the New Testament dispensation, would it not have been indicated?

**A Substantial Demonstration**

That affusion is the Bible mode of water baptism is beautifully shown by Dr. John W. Primrose in his *Presbyterian Church*. He first speaks of the prophetic typical sacrifice of Numbers 19, as the red heifer is burned and her ashes were used in the preparation of the water for impurity (verse 17: “For an unclean person, they shall take of the ashes of the burnt heifer of purification for sin, and running water shall be put therein in a vessel”). This prepared water is sprinkled upon defiled people (verse 19: “shall sprinkle upon the unclean”). This sprinkling the writer of Hebrews calls “baptism” (Heb. 9:10: “divers baptisms”; see the first paragraph of Section I, hereof ).

This typical baptism (applying to the defiled one the typical sacrifice of the red heifer) restored to the unclean the privilege of worshipers, where Jehovah met with His people. “As the ashes were the type of the one true sacrifice, so [sprinkling] the water which contained the ashes was the type of the one real baptism with the Holy Ghost, by whom is applied to us the blood of Jesus” (“sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”—I Pet. 1:2.) Putting these into parallel columns makes this presentation practically a demonstration.

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| **Types** (Before the cross) | **Realities** | **Symbols** (Since the cross) |
| 1. The burning of the red heifer | 1. The sacrifice of the Son of God on Calvary | 1. The Lord’s supper |
| 2. Sprinkling with the water of purification (one of the "divers baptisms" of Heb. 9:10) | 2. The baptism with the Holy Spirit (applying the blood by sprinkling) | 2. Water baptism |

Every item of this table is taken from the Bible; there is no controversy about a single one of them—unless it be by those immersionists who contend that water baptism is not a symbol of the baptism with the Holy Spirit. This matter was considered in Section II, “The Holy Spirit and Water.”

In type, the water is sprinkled (one of the “divers baptisms” of Heb. 9:10). The real baptism with the Holy Spirit is accomplished through the sprinkling of the blood (Heb. 10:22; 12:24; I Pet. 1:2—all are quoted in the third paragraph of this section). It is thus seen that affusion (sprinkling) in the symbolic baptism agrees with the commanded mode of application of the water in the type, and with the revealed mode of application of the blood in the real baptism.

**Sprinkling Is Required by the Bible Picture**

It is believed that the case is made out for all who seek Bible truth and accept nothing not in accord therewith. A Bible doctrine must be determined by the whole Bible and the practice of the whole Bible, and not by dictionaries and other extra-biblical sources. “What saith the Scripture?”—Rom. 4:3.

God never left man to devise any detail of His worship, but has directed carefully, definitely, and explicitly what He wanted done and how. Immersion is not in the Bible picture. We cannot believe God wanted man to add to God’s worship something foreign to His whole Word. If He wanted water baptism performed by a mode different from all His types, illustrations and explicit commands, would He not have said so?

**Is There Need for Further Proof?**

In view of the concordance, the harmony and the parallelism of the symbol (water baptism) with the type and the reality (as shown above), nothing short of an unmistakable, clear, definite, and positive command of Scripture would justify a departure from sprinkling as the evidently intended mode of applying water in symbolic baptism. The Bible contains no such command. On the contrary, as shown in this and the two preceding sections, the evidence is overwhelmingly against such departure and in favor of sprinkling.

**The Case for Affusion (Sprinkling)**

1. It harmonizes Scripture and harmonizes with Scripture, and is never antagonistic thereto. It is continually cropping out all through the Bible—not dependent for proof upon a few detached passages, and continues to let the New Testament be the full-grown flower of which the Old Testament is the bud, not ignoring the Old Testament in an effort to establish an entirely new procedure. It is a fulfillment of Ezekiel 36:25: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you.” Baptism by immersion would ignore this part of this prophecy. Unquestionably, the rest of the prophecy of Ezekiel 36:26-27 has had partial fulfillment at and since Pentecost in the baptism with the Holy Spirit. Surely, then, the symbol predicted in the sprinkling of clean water in verse 25 has been similarly fulfilled in water baptism. Affusion is absolutely required by Hebrews 9:10. These “washings” (Greek: “baptisms”) can be only the purifyings and cleansings of Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers which were invariably performed by sprinkling.

2. Affusion explains the record about John the Baptist without any unanswered question about the record of his mission and his work.

3. It shows the Lord Jesus, in His baptism, fully obedient to the practices He (as the Jehovah of the Old Testament) had ordained for the priesthood.

4. It puts water baptism into its true Bible place as the type and symbol of the one true baptism, that with the Holy Spirit. (Immersionists recognize immersion as so foreign to the mode of baptism with the Holy Spirit that they practically, if not entirely, eliminate water baptism from any relation to the baptism with the Holy Spirit.)

5. Since the blood of Jesus Christ is sprinkled upon us (“sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ”—I Pet. 1:2), and since all related types in the Old Testament that apply water and/or blood do it by sprinkling, the only conclusion possible as to the mode of application of the element (water) that symbolizes the cleansing blood is that it is by sprinkling.

6. Water baptism by sprinkling fills what would otherwise be a blank in that beautiful picture of six parts drawn from Scripture by Dr. John W. Primrose. Five of the six parts are beyond question. If water baptism were by immersion (which has no relation to the Old Testament type nor to the real, the true baptism: that with the Holy Spirit), the picture would be incomplete.

7. Affusion (sprinkling) is as the salvation it symbolizes: of universal application, simple, as immediately available at the north pole as at the equator, and has no ostentatious display of will-worship. Immersion is impracticable for prisoners in jail, for desert countries, and for multitudes coming to one man (as John the Baptist), and would be impossible for many of those who receive their Savior on beds of fatal illness. Did the Lord Jesus institute a sacrament that would ever be physically impossible to administer?

**PART 2. INFANT BAPTISM  
Sec. IV. IN OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS**

That infant baptism is a part of God’s revealed will is shown by a study of the Bible truth contained in the following propositions:

|  |
| --- |
| A. God’s plan of salvation always included infants. B. God’s two covenants of life included infants. C. God’s church has always included infants. |

**A. God’s Plan of Salvation Always Included Infants**

Do infants need salvation? Only if, as infants, they, are lost. Dr. R. A. Webb (*Theology of Infant Salvation*) has said: “The death of an infant is proof that the child is not a moral neutral, but, on the contrary, is positively sinful.” Psalm 51:5 reads: “I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.”

Every infant that ever reached maturity (the Savior alone excepted) has proved true the statement of Romans 5:12, “All have sinned.” Then infants as such are lost and need salvation.

**Are Any Infants Saved While Infants?**

This first proposition is not restricted to those who die in infancy. It is more particularly with the salvation of other infants that this discussion is concerned. The baptism of a baby about to die is not as important as that of one that grows to maturity. Does God ever save an infant as such, or must the child first be capable of faith? If the answer to the second question is “yes,” then the immersionists’ interpretation of Mark 16:16a applies also to 16b, and all who die in infancy are lost eternally. (“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”—Mark 16:16.)

This interpretation will be discussed further on under “Believer’s Baptism.” But, praise God! it is believed that this interpretation is wrong. Nearly all Christians believe that those who die in infancy may be saved.

**Two Bible Instances**

Jeremiah (Jer 1:5—“Before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee”) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:16—“He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother’s womb”) were filled with the Holy Spirit at or before their birth. These examples prove that God’s plan of salvation included infants as a possibility, because these were saved while infants, and did not die as infants.

**B. God’s Two Covenants of Life Included Infants**

God’s covenant of life with Adam was on condition of perfect obedience (“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die”—Gen. 2:17; “By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin”—Rom. 5:12).

Adam’s part was to obey; God’s part was to give life. Adam failed; the covenant was broken. This covenant included infants; the same death that befell Adam came to all (Rom. 5:12, “Death passed upon all men”).

**THE COVENANT OF GRACE**

Immediately after Adam and Eve confessed the disobedience that did away with (abrogated) the covenant of works, God pronounced a judgment on the serpent that included a prophecy of an essential, indispensable part of the second covenant of life. While clearly implied in and necessarily underlying the prophetic utterance of Genesis 3:15 (“her seed...shall bruise thy head and thou shalt bruise his heel”), the covenant of grace was not unmistakably announced until the time of Abraham.

God’s covenant with Abraham was different from His covenant with Adam. It was not of works; it was without condition except faith. It needed only to be believed. “I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed...for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed”—Gen. 17:7. Unconditionally, God says, “I will...be a God unto thee and to thy seed.”

“Walk before me and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1) cannot be a condition of this covenant. Abraham was not “perfect,” nor anyone since Abraham (except One—the Lord Jesus Christ), yet the covenant still holds good, for it is “everlasting” (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19). **It is the covenant of grace**. If not, where does God record that covenant?

**The Renewal at Pentecost**

The proclamation at Pentecost did not repeal the covenant of grace; it renewed it. “The promise is unto you and to your children”—Acts 2:39. “Ye are the children...of the covenant which God made with...Abraham”—Acts 3:25.

The promise was made also to Abraham. “The promise...was...to Abraham...It is of faith...by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all...of the faith of Abraham...the father of us all”—Rom. 4:13, 16.

“They...of faith. are the children of Abraham.” “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ...the promise of the Spirit through faith.” “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made...to thy seed, which is Christ.” “If ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal. 3:7, 14, 16, 29).

According to Galatians 3, the only thing that could change the covenant “confirmed before of God in Christ” (Gal. 3:17) was the law; but the Holy Spirit through Paul says, in the same verse, that the law “cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.” If anything could alter the covenant, would not the Omniscient Spirit have known it? But He recognizes the covenant as in full force and effect (“no man disannulleth”—Gal. 3:16).

**The Grace Covenant Still Includes Infants**

One verse announced God’s grace to Abraham and to his seed: “an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed”—Gen. 17:17. “To Abraham and his seed were the promises made”—Gal. 3:16. The covenant token (circumcision) was administered alike to adults and 8-day-old boys.

Since the proclamation at Pentecost made no change in the covenant sharers, **of course** believers’ children in the new dispensation have a right to the new token of the “everlasting” covenant. God and the covenant remained the same; only the token was changed. **Therefore, infants of believers should be baptized.**

**Two Tokens: Circumcision and Baptism**

Circumcision was the first token of the covenant of grace. Its successor in the New Testament, the second token of the covenant of grace, was baptism, as was shown in Section II hereof, “The Holy Spirit and Water,” under the subheading, “Circumcision and Baptism.” The conclusion reached was that baptism succeeded circumcision as the sign, seal and token of the covenant of grace. God removed the “yoke” of circumcision (“a yoke upon the disciples”—Acts 15:10) and gave the simpler ceremony of baptism; **with no command not to administer the new token to infants, of course this should be done.**

**C. God’s Church Has Always Included Infants**

Some people think there was no “church” before Pentecost. *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance* translates the Greek word for “church” as either the Jewish synagogue or the Christian community of members. Stephen spoke of “the church in the wilderness”—Acts 7:38. The Greek word used here is the same used elsewhere of the New Testament church. The Savior, living in the old dispensation, said, “I will build my church” (Matt. 16:18), and used the same word twice in Matthew 18:17, with no explanation of it; it must have been familiar.

However, this discussion is not primarily concerned with the defense of any terminology. Some word is needed, and “church” will be used as a convenient, easily understood word, to designate the body of God’s people whom He called first out of Ur of the Chaldees, and then out of Egypt.

**THE CHURCH OF THE BIBLE**

“Elders” were officers in both the Old and the New Testament church. The word occurs more than 100 times in the Old Testament, only a few occurrences referring to the aged as such. Presbyter, bishop, and elder, in the New Testament, designate the same officer transferred—name; function and all—from the Old Testament church.

The New Testament Church, then, in its organization, was not a new creation. It was merely an adaptation of an organization that was familiar to the Jews.

**Two Ordinances**

The Old Testament church has two ordinances: 1. A token of membership (circumcision); 2. The Passover. (“It is the Lord’s passover...Ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord...by an ordinance forever”—Ex. 12:1l, 14.)

Likewise, the New Testament church has two ordinances, identical in purpose with those just named, but different in form. The Lord’s supper displaces the passover; both are memorials, and “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”—I Cor. 5:7. Likewise, baptism displaces circumcision, as was shown in Section II hereof.

As was seen in Section II hereof, faith is a prerequisite in both circumcision and baptism. In the case of Isaac—8 days old (Gen. 21:4), it could not have been his faith. It was the faith of his father Abraham. So with other Jewish parent and their children. In the same way, the baptism of infants of believers manifests and depends upon the faith of the parents (at least one parent should be a believer according to I Cor. 7:14: “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife...by the husband; else were your children unclean; but now are they holy”).

**OLD TESTAMENT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Faith was the one requirement for membership in the Old Testament church. “He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of...the faith...he had...the father of all them that believe.” “The promise...was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through...faith.” “It is of faith...by grace; to the end the promise may might be sure to all the seed...to that...of the faith of Abraham...the father of us all” (Rom. 4:11, 13, 16). Additions to church membership were by circumcision. “He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought...must needs be circumcised...the uncircumcised man child...shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant”—Gen. 17:13, 14. “When a stranger...will keep the passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, then...let him...keep it;...no uncircumcised person shall eat thereof. One law shall be to him that is homeborn and unto the stranger”—Ex. 12:48, 49.

**Two Classes**

The membership was of two kinds: 1. Adult; 2. Infant. An 8-days-old baby received the same token as adults (“He that is eight days old shall be circumcised”—Gen. 17:12). Matthew Henry says that at 13, A child began to be a “son of the commandment,” obliged to the duties of adult church membership, having been from his infancy a son of the covenant. Such assumed full responsibility as adults without renewal of the covenant token—without being circumcised again—“after they believed.”

**NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

The requirement of membership in the New Testament church also was faith. The same two classes continued: 1. Adult; 2. Infant. The Old Testament church was taken over, with specified changes, to form the new church; with no change commanded in its membership, no change was made. The Jews would have uproariously denounced a change which left children out (see below: “No protest against abandonment of children”). Church membership continued to include infants, they becoming members through receiving the new token, baptism.

When infant members assume adult church membership, their faith vindicates, justifies, makes good, and rewards the faith of the parents. When they thus ratify the undertaking of their parents, they no more need to be baptized “after they believe” than circumcised children needed to be circumcised again.

It is God only who decides who shall be members of His church. How, then, can any Christian or body of Christians exclude from their organization any whom God would accept as members of the “body” of Christ? It cannot be on God’s authority; then on whose authority is it done?

**Infant Baptism in the New Testament**

The proclamation to Abraham as to children was the same as at Pentecost: “to be a God unto thee and to thy seed”—Gen. 17:7; “the promise is unto you and to your children”—Acts 2:39. Then children of New Testament believers had the same standing and the same right to the new token of the “everlasting” covenant as children before had to the old token of the same covenant. (Only fragments of the early church fathers’ writings remain; but nine out of 12 before A.D. 200 refer to infant baptism as the practice of the church—Dabney’s *Theology*, page 791.)

Taking John’s baptism as one instance, and the baptism at Pentecost as one, the New Testament records only eight or nine instances of water baptism. Three—one third—of these were household baptisms. Would God have recorded them if infants were left out of the New Testament church?

The three household baptisms in the New Testament surely include children. They are:

|  |
| --- |
| “She [Lydia] was baptized and her household”—Acts 16:l5. “He (the Philippian jailer)...was baptized, he and all his, straightway”—Acts 16:33. “I baptized also the household of Stephanus”—I Cor 1:16. |

**A Dilemma for Immersionists**

The record of two of these household baptisms indicates that small children were baptized. Acts 16:14 records only Lydia’s heart as being opened (“whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things...spoken of Paul”) yet “she was baptized and her household.” **Either some adults were baptized without conversion, or some children too young to believe in the Savior were baptized on the faith of the mother.**

Likewise, Acts 16:34 records only the jailer as “believing,” for the translated Greek word is singular. The verse reads: “He...rejoiced, believing in God with all his house.” He “was baptized, he and all his, straightway.” (Moffatt expresses it: “got baptized instantly, he and his family.”) Since only the jailer’s faith is mentioned, either some adults were baptized without conversion, or some children too young to believe were baptized on the faith of the father.

Paul and Silas would not have baptized unsaved adults, so the other alternative must he true. There must have been children in these households who were baptized on the faith of their parents.

**NO PROTEST AGAINST THE ABANDONMENT OF CHILDREN**

If the new dispensation left out children of believers, Jewish parents who became Christians would leave a relationship to God in which their children shared, and, under the same covenant, enter a relationship to the same God in which their children would have no part. If parents accepted Christ, their children would lose their privileges, would no longer be “children of the covenant.”

The Bible records much opposition by Jews to the Christian religion; they said it ignored the practices of the Old Testament. There was a great hullabaloo about dropping circumcision, but never a word about leaving children of believers out.

Thousands of Jews became Christians, but made no protest against abandonment of their children. How eagerly would Pharisees, Sadducees, and all other parties of the Jews have paraded such a defect of the Christian religion! But search! Not a trace of this objection in or out of the Bible. **There was no occasion for it; the children were not left out.** No parent even inquired as to the standing of his children. No protest against abandonment of children is perhaps the strongest proof—except direct Bible teachings—of the practice of infant baptism by the apostles.

**The Covenant Token**

A “covenant” ordinarily is a contract or an agreement between or among two or more people. When used, a “token” or “seal” is evidence that the parties to the covenant recognize and accept their respective undertakings.

Circumcision and baptism were never intended in themselves to save anybody, adult or child. But God had a definite purpose in appointing a sign (which was a token and a seal) of the covenant of grace. A study of the respective undertaking on God’s part and on the part of parents, which were recognized and accepted when the token of the covenant was applied to a child of the covenant, reveals the graciousness and love of our God in adding the second part of the covenant of grace (“and to thy seed”).

**GOD AND THE COVENANT TOKEN**

An accepted principle of interpretation of the Bible is that the first mention therein of any subject shows God’s attitude to or view of the subject. The first mention of “token“ in the Bible is in connection with the rainbow in Genesis 9:12: In Genesis 9:16 God states as follows His purpose in appointing this token (and does not the same apply to all His designated tokens?): “The bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it; that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature...upon the earth.” Does He not also “look upon” His appointed token of the covenant of grace, that He “may remember the everlasting covenant between God” and His people?

The circumcision of an infant was not merely a ceremony; it was a token of a covenant between God and the child’s parents which had for its end the salvation of the child. What other explanation can there be of God’s offer “to be a God...to thy seed” in Genesis 17:7, and of His command to place a designated token upon an infant? Was not the token to bind God and the parents to fulfill their respective parts in the covenant?

**God’s Faithfulness Illustrated**

Moses and Samuel are Bible illustrations of God’s covenant faithfulness when parents do their part. Both were removed from their homes when weaned: Moses went into an environment that was hostile to God, Samuel into one that ought to have encouraged godliness; but Eli’s sons (and Samuel’s sons) were anything but godlike. God’s faithfulness to His covenant (“to be a God...to thy seed”—Gen. 17:7) is amply proved in the Bible record of these two men. “God” is the only explanation of their careers. In their early years, their parents were faithful to the covenant. God, accepting the parents’ obedience, made good His promise.

**PARENTS AND THE COVENANT TOKEN**

The token on a child was and is evidence of the parents’ faith: that God would keep His promise to be a God to the parents’ seed. When parents (as Abraham did) continue to show their faith by obedience to God, in providing for their children God’s means of grace (particularly the Word and prayer), God rewards their faith by fulfilling His promise to be a God to their seed. “God loves to save by families,” Dr. Theron H. Rice used to say. But the parent must fulfill his part of the covenant.

As in circumcision, in having a child baptized, the parent attests his recognition of (a) the child’s need for salvation, (b) God’s desire for the child’s salvation and His willingness to enter into covenant with the parents for that end, and (c) the parent’s responsibility for the child’s salvation, so far as that is dependent upon the parent’s obedience to God’s requirements. This responsibility was (and is) in two parts:

1. The acceptance of God’s gracious offer to be a God to his child, and, through obedience to His command to circumcise (baptize) the child, to bind God to the fulfillment of His gracious promise.

2. The part parents themselves do in complying with what God evidently included in His covenant with Abraham.

**Obedience by Parents Is Still Required**

The fulfillment of the first part of the covenant of grace—“to be a God to thee” (Gen. 17:7)—as of the first part of the corresponding promise in the New Testament—“thou shalt be saved” (Acts 16:31)—is conditioned only upon faith. God saves the one who believes. But the fulfillment of the second part—“and to thy seed,” “and thy house” (see verses cited)—seems surely conditioned upon an obedience which proves and fulfills the parents’ faith. Does not God unmistakably declare this in Genesis 18:19 when He says that His bringing “upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him” follows upon Abraham’s commanding “his household after him” and their keeping “the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment?”

The lesson for parents today is: God’s promise is the same, for the covenant is the same. Genesis 18:19 still applies: “I know him that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him.” Since God hasn’t changed, His fulfillment today of His part of the covenant depends upon the parent’s fulfilling his part (“that the Lord may bring upon...that which He hath spoken”—the parent should fill in his name where the periods are).

**God’s Anger at Parental Negligence**

Obedience to God’s command to circumcise a child was not optional with parents. **God was not indifferent as to whether or not the token was applied.** A striking proof of this is seen in Exodus 4:24-26: “It came to pass by the way in the inn that the Lord met him [Moses] and sought to kill him. Then Zipporah took a sharp stone, and cut off the foreskin of her son, and cast it at his feet and said, Surely a bloody husband art thou to me. So he let him go.”

Applying the “first mention” principle of Bible interpretation to this, the first mention in the Bible of a failure to place upon a believer’s child the covenant token, God’s anger, such that He “sought to kill” Moses, indicates how strongly God wanted the token applied, and how incensed He was (and is) at any believing parent’s failure to utilize the token.

**Why Was God Angry?**

When God’s anger burns so that He seeks to kill, there is a reason. Does not the reason here lie in the results of the disobedience? Moses had failed (or refused) to acknowledge his responsibility for the soul of his child, so far as that was dependent upon his obedience to God.

“Human responsibility is man’s response to God’s ability.” God is able to save, but lack of faith limits Him (as it did the Lord Jesus at Nazareth: “He did not many mighty works there, because of their unbelief”—Matt. 13:58). Moses did not respond by obedience; his faith perhaps failed, and so he did not provide what God demanded before He would work. Therefore, God (who **wanted** to be a God “to thy seed”) was so enraged that He sought to kill Moses.

**God Still Eager to Save**

A clear statement of God’s love to children and His desire for their salvation (because of which He ordained a token of His covenant) is in Matthew 18:14: “It is not the will of your Father...in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.” Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the Savior’s words: “Suffer little children...to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven”—Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16.

Has not God said in effect to parents: “You do your part, and I’ll save your child”? In Genesis 17:14, of “the uncircumcised man child...that soul shall be cut off from his people.” A wonderful promise is in Isaiah 44:3: “I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

He still awaits obedience by believing parents to His revealed will for their God-entrusted children. Dare such parents fail Him? Then the token (baptism) which God recognizes as an acceptance by parents of their covenant with Him for the child should not be withheld from any child of a believer.

**Objections**

Two objections are made to infant baptism: 1. The New Testament teaches only “believer’s baptism.” 2. What can an infant know about “baby sprinkling”?

**1. “BELIEVER’S BAPTISM”**

The proof text for this objection is Mark 16:16: “He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.”

If the first part of the verse excludes infant baptism, because infants cannot believe, the second part denies infant salvation for the same reason, but immersionists do not usually advocate this. But why interpret one half of a verse one way and refuse to take the other half the same way? The absurdity of this interpretation is seen also in passages like II Thessalonians 8:10: “If any would not work, neither should he eat.” Should infants, therefore, be starved?

Furthermore, in Romans 4:11, circumcision, although administered to an 8-days-old child, is designated “a seal of...faith.” That token of the covenant was administered on the faith of the parents; why, then, is it absurd to administer to a child in the new dispensation “a seal of faith”? to administer to a child the new token of the “everlasting” covenant in the God-directed way on the faith of the parent?

**God Hasn’t Changed**

There is nothing in the New Testament to imply—much less to declare—God’s withdrawal of the privileges He had particularly extended infants in the old dispensation. With no Scripture requiring such a withdrawal, three questions need answering:

a. Why should the God of Matthew 18:14 (“It is not the will of your Father...in heaven that one of these little ones should perish”) desire such withdrawal? Because the Bible records no withdrawal, a justifying motive is needed to support the assumption that these privileges have been withdrawn.

b. If God has withdrawn these privileges, why did He not record it?

c. Why did God record “you and your children” (Acts 2:39) and “and thy house” (Acts 16:31) if He did not mean these expressions?

**Should God’s Church Be More Exclusive Than Heaven?**

Immersionists usually accept the belief of most Christians that infants dying in infancy are saved. That is, immersionists believe that God admits to heaven some whom they would exclude from the church. They, therefore, would make the type of the kingdom, the earthly church, more exclusive than is the kingdom itself. Is not the church on earth a training school for heaven? If God admits babies to heaven, would He exclude them from His school of preparation for heaven?

**2. “BABY SPRINKLING”**

The second objection calls in question the wisdom of God who directed the circumcision of the 8-days-old baby. Could the baby know anything of the purpose of this act?

The infant knows nothing more of the purpose of his baptism than Isaac knew of the purpose of his circumcision, or than the brought infants knew of the touch (“the blessing,” Mark 10:16) of the Savior (“They brought unto Him also infants, that He would touch them”—Luke 18:15). But the parent can know of his covenant with God for his child, and God knows of His covenant with the parent to be a God to his seed.

If it is “silly,” as urged by immersionists, to baptize a baby, then it was worse than silly—it was brutal—to mutilate an 8-days-old baby by circumcision. However, God specifically commanded the latter (Gen. 17:12), and when He changed the covenant token to baptism, He never denied to children the new token.

**Infant Baptism Illustrated by a Child’s Disease**

An infant who had the whooping cough knows nothing more about it later than of baptism as an infant. In both cases, his knowledge is based on what he has been told. But the whooping cough germs know; they are unable to make that one sick again.

The baptism of an infant may leave no marks that Satan must recognize as evidence that God preempted that soul, but whenever parents supplement baptism with further obedience to God’s other requirements for the care of children, fulfilling their part of the covenant, God “is faithful that promised” (Heb. 10:23), and Satan fails. The writer hereof cannot otherwise understand why (when he was away from God and therefore vulnerable) Satan failed in so many temptations of him even getting his consent, but God intervened.

**Seven Bible Points about Infant Baptism**

1. God definitely included infants in announcing the covenant of grace in Genesis 17:7: “and to thy seed” and directed the circumcision of the 8-days-old boy. It has been said: “The New Testament gives the full-grown flower of which the Old Testament gives the bud.” If infants were left out in the new dispensation, where is the flower from the bud?

2. The words introducing the new dispensation included “and to your children”—Acts 2:39. What would they mean to a Jew who knew all his life the inclusion of children in covenant privileges?

3. The new dispensation adds nothing to make the inclusion of infants impossible or even difficult. On the contrary, the covenant’s new token is applicable to both sexes, thus enlarging its scope.

4. God records three times—separate occasions—the baptism of households. In two of them, the words used indicate children under the age of believing. See “A Dilemma for Immersionists,” on a previous page hereof.

5. There was no protest by the Jews because the Christian religion left the children out—abandoned them. **It did not do it.**

6. Of the two objections to infant baptism, one is based on an untenable interpretation of one Bible verse, and the other is a condemnation of God’s explicit command.

7. Entering into covenant with God for the salvation of their children has not been left to the preference of parents. They may not do it or leave it alone, according to their own ideas, and find acceptance with Gad either way. God wants it done, or He would not have commanded parents to do it. Any believing parent who, like Moses, fails to have applied to his child the token of the covenant into which that child was born, has only to turn to Exodus 4:24-26 to see how God view his non-obedience.

**FINAL APPEAL**

Since God’s plan of salvation, God’s covenants of life, and God’s church always included infants, who among men would deny to helpless babies of believers their God-given right to the sign, seal, token (baptism) of their inheritance in the covenant of grace and in the church?

This study of infant baptism does not uphold baptismal regeneration of children or anybody else. It is not the type nor the symbol that accomplishes anything, but the reality for which it stands. When wicked Israel, without repentance of their sins, depended upon the ark, the symbol of God’s presence, to give them victory over the Philistines, a terrible defeat awaited them. “Israel was smitten...a very great slaughter...thirty thousand footmen”—I Sam. 4:10.

In Isaiah 1:10-20 and again in Isaiah 58:1-7 (both too long to quote here), God complains of forms without reality, of compliance with the letter of the law without their hearts in it, of pretended worship with no consciousness of God. The application of water in obedience to God’s command does not itself insure salvation for anybody, but continued obedience attests the indwelling of God’s Spirit and gives assurance of acceptance with God who is able to save (“Salvation is of the Lord”—Jonah 2:9).

Parents should remember that it was in reference to salvation that the Lord Jesus gave that wonderful revelation: “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible”—Mark 10:27. God was able to make good His word to Abraham: “and to thy seed“ (Gen. 17:7), and to the Philippian jailer: “and thy house” (Acts 16 :31). He is still able, and He awaits today the fulfillment by parents of their part of the covenant. Please read again the whole discussion under “The Covenant Token,” on a previous page hereof.

Someone has said, “The church is wasting precious energy reclaiming children of believers that ought to be used in winning those who have had no such heritage.” What is the trouble? Parents either do not bind God in covenant for their children, as He invites and commands to be done, or else the parents are unfaithful to their covenant vows. If any parent who reads this has been guilty either way, will you not, right now, confess to God the sin of your failure, and then make all amends in your power? The salvation of your children (and, perhaps, of others) may depend upon it.

**PART 3. IMMERSION: WHENCE?  
SEC. V. DICTIONARIES, ETC.**

There are six supports (or would “props” or “crutches” he a better word?) for the idea of baptism by immersion. Of these, four are based on isolated Bible words or expressions; of the other two (both outside the Bible), one is disowned by the Bible and the other is taken from church history 50 years after the close of the New Testament. Five of these will be considered in this section; the sixth in the next.

(It is interesting—and possibly instructive—in this connection to remember that among Bible numerals, “six” is the number relating to man. Immersion is certainly of man’s devising. The very word itself is foreign to the Bible.)

**l. THE MEANING OF *BAPTIZO***

One of the definitions of Greek dictionaries for *baptizo* is to immerse. There are several others, but immersionists usually give no intimation that this is only a selected definition.

Dr. Alexander Carson, who wrote an elaborate book entitled *Baptism, Its Mode and Subjects*, and who insists that baptism always and invariably means to dip or immerse, admits (page 55): “I have all the lexicographers and commentators against me.” Do you remember the one juror who complained of the eleven “obstinate” men (the rest of the jury) who would not agree with him?

But Dr. Carson (whom Dr. Edmund B. Fairfield on page 19 of his *Letters on Baptism*, called “the ablest of the Baptist writers”) admitted that “the idea of water is not in the word at all” (see page 22 of Fairfield’s book). Dr. Fairfield said on page 12 of his book that after more than two years of study and labor to maintain his own Baptist beliefs, he was compelled to admit that “*baptizo* did not mean ‘immerse’ in the New Testament.”

**Immersion Is Not in the Bible**

“Immerse” never occurs in any of its forms in the English Bible, in either the King James or the American Standard Version. This is not because the Hebrew and Greek languages lack the word, but because there was nothing in any of the Bible purifying rites which called for it. The fact that the English Bible nowhere uses “immerse” in any of its forms puts a heavy burden of proof upon those who contend that baptism means immersion. “Sprinkle” in various forms occurs 41 times in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and 6 times in Hebrews, besides many more times in other parts of the Bible.

Some immersionists claim: “Scholarship is all on our side.” Do you remember the poor fellow who waved his arms around and exclaimed: “We arsh zhe people?” Someone asked: “Who says so?” “Or-r-r, we admit it.” Even if this claim could be established (instead of being simply “admitted”), what would that prove? No matter where “scholarship” may be, the whole Bible is against immersion. Immersion is not in the Bible picture anywhere. God says, “My thoughts are not your thoughts...As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are...my thoughts than your thoughts”—Isa. 55:8, 9. “To the law and to the testimony”—Isa. 8:20.

But affusionists have no occasion to fear correct and accurate scholarship. Rev. J. W. Dale, D.D., has amply proved this in his 4 volumes—a total of more than 1800 pages—on baptism. These volumes surely are scholarly—of very superior scholarship—and they are conclusive in favor of affusion.

**“What Saith the Scripture?”**

The Bible should, of course, be the textbook in any study of God’s truth. Words and phrases even frequently heard sometimes have no Bible warrant. For instance, such expressions as “under the waves,” “follow your Lord under the water,” “into the watery grave,” etc., are never used in the Bible. If *baptizo* is ever used only once in Scripture where immersion is impossible, the argument from its selected meaning is of no value. If in one Bible baptism, immersion cannot be its mode, there is no assurance from the selected dictionary definition that baptism is by immersion anywhere else.

Many immersionists (see *Smith’s Dictionary of the Bible*, “Baptism”) admit that the baptism with water was not by immersion at Pentecost (3000 in one day without any available means of immersion), nor in the case of the Philippian jailer (it must have been within the walls of the jail), nor in the washing (Greek: “baptizing”) of tables (or couches) in Mark 7:4. The record of no instance of Bible baptism requires immersion (see also “a. Synonyms” under Section I, hereof).

**The Three Baptisms of Matthew 3:11**

In this verse (“I...baptize you with water. He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire”) three baptisms are mentioned: with water, with the Holy Spirit, with fire. If baptism always and invariably means immersion, this verse speaks of an immersion in water an immersion in the Holy Spirit, and an immersion in fire.

How does the Bible describe these three baptisms? The only description of the baptism with fire is in Acts 2:3: “There appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire; and it sat upon each of them.” Accepting this language as a correct description (as we must), the baptism with fire could not have been an immersion in fire. “Sat upon” does not describe an immersion.

The 2nd chapter of Acts does not describe the mode of baptism with the Holy Spirit, but it is described in Acts 11:15: “The Holy Ghost fell on them, as on us at the beginning.” Every description of the baptism with the Holy Spirit represents Him as coming upon, being poured out, put in or within, sent upon, falling upon, descending upon, etc. Not one expression admits the idea of immersion in the Holy Spirit. How, then, can the claim be maintained that baptism is always and invariably immersion when two out of three baptisms of Matthew 3:11 cannot be immersion?

**Baptisms with Water**

Only one New Testament water baptism is described in sufficient detail to indicate its mode—that of Saul of Tarsus. Ananias told him to “arise and be baptized” (Acts 22:16), and he “arose and was baptized” (Acts 9:18). The one Greek word translated in one place “arise” and in the other “he arose” is a participle; a literal translation in both places would be “arising” or “having arisen,” or “standing up.” There is no suggestion of any change of garments or of travel to a place suitable for immersion. (Moffatt translates those passages in Acts: “Get up and be baptized” and “he got up and was baptized.”)

Paul had had no food nor water for three days (“he...three days...neither did eat nor drink” —Acts 9:9). He was baptized before taking food (“he...was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened”—Acts 9:18, 19). It would be unreasonable to read into the record that such an unbiblical thing as immersion was rushed upon him before giving him food.

**Inevitable Conclusion**

This “prop” (that *baptizo* means to immerse) is confessedly based on Greek dictionaries. Immersionists do not attempt to get this definition out of the Bible. Having gotten out of Greek dictionaries a definition that is acceptable to them, they interpret parts of the Bible in the light of this definition. But since the Bible not only fails to confirm that definition but sets up one of its own which does not admit the idea of immersion, the structure built on the dictionary definition crumbles and falls.

The argument for immersion from the selected dictionary definition fails to make good. Since in Bible usage, *baptizo* does not always and invariably mean immerse (as our immersionist friends allege it does, and as it must, to make their argument valid), and especially because it cannot mean immerse in some Bible instances, there is no assurance in the selected dictionary definition that any given instance of baptism is by immersion.

**The Bible Identifies Its Mode of Baptism**

Bible students recognize in the ninth chapter of Hebrews a summary of some of the practices which are described in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. In Hebrews 9:10, the Greek *baptismois*, baptizings, is translated by the English word “washings.” These washings (baptizings) can be no other than the sprinklings described in the Old Testament books named. Since these “divers” baptizings were all performed by sprinkling, we have here the Bible’s explicit designation of sprinkling as its mode of baptism (see Section I, hereof).

**2. IN THE POST-APOSTOLIC CHURCH**

A second “prop” of the idea of baptism by immersion is the existence of such baptism in the early church. It is admitted that the church from A.D. 150, and on, practiced immersion as baptism—not exclusively, but it was common. It was frequently (if not usually) triune immersion—three times in the triune name—and the candidate was nude. But this admission does not charge the apostles with such teachings or practices. The doctrines of the church between A.D. 100 and 150 contained these false concepts: “sins cleansed by alms and faith,” “saints saved by works of righteousness which they had done.” No one would say that these things in the teachings of the early church proved that they were taught by the apostles. Nor does the existence of an unbiblical mode of baptism 50 years after the last apostle died prove that the apostles taught or practiced such an anomaly. Please note:

(a) This argument from the practice of the post-apostolic church is outside the Bible. The Bible is our textbook. So let us go “to the law and to the testimony” (Isa. 8:20).

(b) This practice of baptizing by immersion—then as now—has no Bible precedent. Because of this fact, because it is a departure from the simplicity (and—in the case of the post-apostolic church, since the candidate was nude—the respectability) of the practice of the apostles, it must be rejected.

**3. SOME ENGLISH PREPOSITIONS**

A third argument for immersion is based on certain English prepositions. From the English translations “in” Jordan and “out of” the water (in John’s baptism of the Savior); and “down into” and “up out of” (in the case of the eunuch), the claim is made that these prove immersion.

As all know, the New Testament was written in Greek, which language had fewer prepositions than the English has. This required more meanings for each Greek preposition; each usually had a number of English equivalents (our immersionist friends ignore this fact). Since the words translated as above have other meanings in English, who is to say that these translations in the English version are correct? (In translating a foreign language into English, the connection and other matters decide the right English word to select from the equivalent of a foreign word. The problem is not merely to find out what English word will make sense, but what will give the right sense: the meaning intended.)

***En***

“*En*,” the Greek preposition usually translated “in,” is translated “with” twice in Matthew 3:11 and Mark 1:8, once in Mark 1:23, and once in Luke 3:16. In Revelation 13:10 (“he that killeth with the sword must be killed with the sword”), it is twice translated “with”; no other word would make sense here. Greek dictionaries say it is properly translatable as “in,” “on,” “at,” “near,” “with,” “among,” “during,” etc. *En* is translated “at” in the New Testament 111 times out of about 200 times that same Greek word is so translated. Then who knows that the translation “in” Jordan is correct? How can we be sure it should not be “at” or “near” Jordan?

John the apostle three times definitely says John the Baptist baptized “beyond” the Jordan: John 1:28, 3:26, 10:40. The last reads: Jesus “went away again beyond Jordan into the place where John first baptized, and there He abode.” Did Jesus then abide “in” the river Jordan? For that was where John the Baptist first baptized.

***Ek* and *Apo***

*Ek*, the Greek preposition usually translated “out of,” is not used by Matthew of the baptism of Jesus (Matt. 3:16). Matthew uses the Greek preposition *apo*, which is nearly always translated “from.” Matthew 3:16 is almost surely correctly translated “from the water” (as in the American Standard Version).

*Apo* and *ek* are variable readings in the Greek of Mark’s account of the baptism of the Savior (Mark 1:10—only Matthew and Mark mention this detail). If *apo* should he found to be the correct reading in the Greek of Mark 1:10, all the probabilities would be against the correctness of the English translation “out of the water” in the account in Mark of the baptism of the Lord Jesus.

But even with *ek*, there is no certainty that the translation “out of” is correct. The Bible and Greek dictionaries say that *ek* is properly translated “out of,” “from,” “away from,” “with,” “by.” The weakness of any argument based on the translation “out of” in the King James Version of Matthew 3:16 and Mark 1:10 is evident.

***Eis***

*Eis*, used in Acts 8:38 of Philip and the eunuch, has a variety of English equivalents according to Greek dictionaries: “into,” “unto” (as in John 11:31—“she goeth unto the grave”—when the tomb was closed; see verse 39), “to” (as in John 20:4—“to the sepulchre,” but not “into”—see the next verse), “towards,” etc. *Eis* occurs eleven times in Acts 8, and only once (verse 38) is it translated “into.” Then perhaps Acts 8:28 should be translated: “Both went down to (or unto) the water”; and using the facts about *ek* in the preceding paragraphs for verse 39, “they came up from the water.”

However, if “down into” and “up out of” were the only proper translations of the Greek, they would not prove immersion. Many have driven horses or cars over country roads down into and up out of water without immersing horses or cars.

**The Argument Fails**

Evidently, no valid argument for immersion can be based on English translations of Greek prepositions. Who knows that the Greek words are correctly translated when other English prepositions are as accurate as the ones used, and accord fully with the rest of the Bible? Moreover, while the English prepositions used are agreeable to the immersion idea (though not requiring it), they do not prove immersion and are in no wise inconsistent with affusion (sprinkling). Since these Greek prepositions are capable of translations which would not even admit immersion, the English translations give no light on the Bible mode of baptism.

Furthermore, the translators of the King James Version recognized no implication of immersion in the English preposition used. Almost all, if not every one, of the translators were affusionists. The idea that immersion is established or even supported by these English prepositions has grown up through a study of the English version and a neglect of the Greek original.

**4. “MUCH WATER”**

The fourth dependence of immersionists is the English expression “much water” in John 3:23 (“John also was baptizing in Aenon...because there was much water there”). This “prop” vanishes when the Greek is examined. The Greek words are “many waters” (see A.S.V. margin). “Aenon” was a place of springs, as the word means. Immersionists do not usually immerse in springs, but such are convenient for a big concourse of people. This is another case of the study of the English version and of the neglect of the Greek original.

Immersionists pounce on this perversion of words and parade it as proof positive that the proper procedure in preparing a prospect for church membership is to plunge the petitioner into a plenty of water. However, when reveling in this expression “much water” they seem to forget that their great reliance—Rom. 6:4—is a Sahara Desert in regard to water.

If “much water” is necessary to valid baptism, as immersionists claim, they would have trouble finding “much water” for the baptism of the 3000 at Pentecost, for that of the eunuch on a road that Scripture says is “desert” (Acts 8:26), for that of Saul of Tarsus and for that of the Philippian jailer inside the jail at midnight.

There never was any difficulty with administering the God-planned, Bible mode of water baptism (sprinkling) whenever there is enough water to sustain the physical life of those to be baptized.

**5. BORN OF WATER (JOHN 3:5)**

An argument which seems conclusive to many who content themselves with the apparent meaning of words without studying their real significance is found in John 3:5 where the words “born of water” are taken to refer to baptism by immersion. (This immersion idea is very accommodating to the requirements of immersionists. In Romans 6, because the prevailing thought is of a death, burial and resurrection, immersion is interpreted as setting forth a death, burial and resurrection. But a different thought is needed in John 3:5, so this versatile chameleon is taken to set

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