

THE MODE OF BAPTISM

Everyone in the religious world admits to baptism by immersion as a scriptural mode of baptism. The problem arises when it is claimed that immersion is the only scripturally authorised mode. Those who believe otherwise counter-claim by affirming that in the N.T. sprinkling and pouring were used by the Apostles and the Church. Verses have been cited along this line, and the rest of this paper will be given to reviewing the major arguments given in support of sprinkling as a mode of christian baptism.

Mark 7:1-5, is by all accounts the strongest argument for sprinkling in the New Testament, so most of our time will be spent here. Thomas S. Hall in his book "Infant Baptism Scriptural," chapter 7, pages 54-59, develops the point as follows. "In Mk. 7:4, we read that the Pharisees 'when they come from the markets except they wash (GREEK=BAPTIZE THEMSELVES), they eat not, and many other things they have received to hold as the washing (GREEK=BAPTIZING) of cups and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables, 'HERE WE ARE TOLD THAT THE PHARISEES FIRST 'BAPTISE THEMSELVES' before eating, whereas we see, from verse 2 f., the meaning is not that they immersed themselves, but that they WASHED THEIR HANDS. It is therefore, quite plain that the baptism here spoken of does not imply that the Pharisees immersed themselves. They BAPTIZED THEMSELVES SIMPLY BY POURING WATER UPON THEIR HANDS, which ever has been, and is to this day, the manner of washing the hands in Eastern lands (see 2 Kings 3:11). Again it is equally plain that the BAPTIZING OF TABLES SPOKEN OF HERE DOES NOT IMPLY THAT THE TABLES WERE IMMERSERD. Thus we see how utterly mistaken is the idea that the word baptize means always to immerse."

Mr. Hall very cleverly gets the reader to think that the situation as described in verses 1-3, are exactly the same as in verse 4. Read again verses 1-3, notice what the writer emphasizes, that some of the disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed hands. Yet the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands. What the disciples were doing at that time, by eating with unwashed hands violated this tradition. Mark 7:1-3, focus the readers attention on the supposed violation, by the disciples. Verse 4, on the other hand, zooms in on the excesses of the legalistic Pharisees and Jews who, when they come from the MARKET PLACE; where no doubt they would have come in contact with pagan traders or members of the ordinary populace, and thereby contracted a greater uncleanness; would baptize themselves. There is something more than just eating with unwashed hands here in verse 4, this defilement required a more thorough purificaton. Mr. Hall is not content with implying that the situations are the same in verses 1-3 and in verse 4 but that the word "wash" in verse 3 is exactly the same word as in verse 4.

They are not, verse 3 has the Greek word NIPTO, for wash, and verse 4 has the word BAPTIZO for wash. R. C. Trench, on page 161 of his book "Synonyms of the New Testament," says that NIPTO 'Almost always expresses the washing of part of the body — the hands, MK.7:3, the feet JN 13:5, the face MT.6:17.' The definitions of BAPTIZO show it to be altogether different to NIPTO. W. E. Vine says of

BAPTIZO, "To baptize, primarily a frequentative form of (BAPTO), to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another." Arndt and Gingrich say of BAPTIZO, "Dip, immerse; (in non-Christian lit. also 'Plunge, sink, drench, overwhelm, etc), page 131.

It can be safely said that no scholar ancient or modern has defined the word BAPTIZO other than dip or immerse.

Now let us collate all this information, verses 3 and 4 present two situations. The word "wash" in verses 3 and 4 are different Greek words. The definitions of the words are distinct and different, making it clear that two wholly separate acts are under consideration in verses 3 and 4. Yet in the face of all this Mr. Hall wants us to believe, "They baptized themselves simply by pouring water upon their hands!"

Ignoring the consensus of scholarship, Mr. Hall proceeds in his argument to try and make it seem absurd to use immerse in verse 4, because as he says, "It is equally plain that the BAPTIZING OF TABLES SPOKEN OF HERE DOES NOT IMPLY THAT THE TABLES WERE IMMersed." If one is using a modern translation the words "and of tables" at the end of verse 4, will not be there. The reason is that it is not sufficiently substantiated by the early manuscripts to warrant inclusion. Yet this is all Mr. Hall can offer by way of objection! Even if it was part of the text, his argument would still be incorrect, because these scrupulous Jews would, according to the context, go so far as to immerse a couch, (the King James wrongly translates the Greek word "KLINĒ" as table, it more correctly means, couch or bed, Thayers Lexicon, p.350) in order to remove its ceremonial defilement. Mr. Hall has granted this by saying that they "sprinkled" the couch to remove its defilement. It must be obvious to all that they would do whatever was necessary to make the couch ceremonially clean again. Their fanaticism, if it has a bearing on the subject, would support the extreme of immersing the couch.

Imagining a large cumbersome, modern couch, you may be thinking this whole argument is irrational. Yet the difficulty is more imagined than real, as the footnote in Weymouth's translation reveals "Of course they do not mean what we English call 'beds.' They were mere mattresses or thick rugs, travellers in Eastern countries often witness the complete submersion of 'beds,' which are then dried in the sun," page 115, note 5.

So Mr. Hall's initial statement, "It is equally plain that the BAPTIZING OF TABLES SPOKEN OF HERE DOES NOT IMPLY THAT THE TABLES WERE IMMersed" is just not true! On the contrary, as the word BAPTIZO will not allow for any other act than dipping or immersion, it is equally plain that these "tables" were immersed. These immersions of couches were practicable and common place in Eastern countries, and the fanaticism of the Jewish legalist would insure that they took these extreme measures to sanctify even their couches.

How different all this is to our understanding of the verse when we read the proper definition into it, "And when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they (dip, immerse, submerge, bathe) themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the (dipping) of cups and pitchers and copper pots." Mr. Hall's contention that pouring equals baptism, has no foundation in reason or scripture.

As we have already established that the word "baptize," the experts, be translated "immersion" then 1 Cor. 10:2 should read, "Were all immersed unto Moses *in the cloud and in the sea.*" The illustration will suffice to prove that they were *buried* in the cloud and in the sea. Mr. Hall boldly claims "There was no immersion of the Israelites, for they all passed over on dry ground (Ex. 14:22)." Now who are we going to believe, the Apostle Paul, who says "they were immersed," or Mr. Hall who says, "There was no immersion?" The fact that they passed over on dry ground proves

there was no spray, because if there was, the ground would not have been dry! As the ground was dry, the sprinkling theory hasn't got a drop of truth in it.

The next problem Mr. Hall presents for our consideration is the baptism of the Apostles with the Holy Spirit, Acts 1:5. Let us remember from the outset that any terms used with reference to the reception of the person of the Holy Spirit will have to be figurative. With that in mind let us read verse 5 of Acts chapter one. "For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now." John's baptism and the Holy Spirit baptism are loosely connected for good reasons. (One) the elements used in each case are different, John baptizes "with water," God baptizes with "the Holy Spirit." (Two) having noticed the differences we are now ready to consider the similarities, John's baptism required "much water" JN.3:23, those who were baptized were *overwhelmed* with water. Likewise those who were baptized in the Spirit were overwhelmed with the Spirit. Thayer (on page 94 of his Lexicon) says it means, "To imbue richly with the Holy Spirit." All the rich lustre of the figure of speech is lost to Mr. Hall; instead of the effulgence of Pentecostal Spirit baptism, he has "Mercy drops falling around them."

If these are not the reasons for the link between John's baptism and the Holy Spirit baptism, what is? It is also worth noting that had the inspired writer wanted us to understand that the Apostles were sprinkled with the spirit, he would have used the Greek word for 'sprinkling' which is RANTIZO, but he didn't. Even when the word EKCHEO, Eng. "pour forth" is used, Acts 1:17, it has ties more with the way God is *sending out* His Spirit, than with the mode in which the Apostles receive it. For when he talks about the mode of Spirit baptism, He says, "You shall be baptized (BAPTIZO = immersed, overwhelmed) with the Holy Spirit" Acts 1:5. It's as if the Holy Spirit is poured forth from God as a great river, a river in which the Apostles are to be baptized.

All of the foregoing only serves to prove what has been accepted by the best scholars for generations, that the primitive form of baptism was by immersion. LUTHER — "The term baptism is a Greek word; it may be rendered into Latin by 'mersio': when we immerse anything in water, that it may be entirely covered with water." CONYBEARE AND HOWSON — Anglican. "It is needless to add that baptism was (unless in exceptional cases) administered by immersion." JOHN WESLEY — Methodist. "We are buried with Him" — alluding to the ancient manner of baptizing by immersion." CATHOLIC DICTIONARY — "In Apostolic times the body of the baptized person was immersed, for St. Paul looks on this immersion as typifying burial with Christ, and speaks of baptism as a bath."

All Scripture and scholarship concur in teaching that baptism in the Apostolic times was by immersion only.