

# INFANT BAPTISM

## Has Jesus Christ commanded it?

IN this country, New Zealand, there has been for a number of years a movement for church union. Five of the most prominent bodies concerned are the Anglican, Presbyterian, Methodist, Congregational, and the Churches of Christ (Associated). These bodies are agreed in principle, the need for union. They have been fraternising with one another, but so far the only definite thing they seem to have done is to agree to naming the proposed union "The Church of Christ in New Zealand".

One thing they are not agreed on is the matter of Christian baptism. The first four named bodies practise infant sprinkling, and call it Christian baptism. It seems from reports that they have discussions among themselves on this subject. We take this opportunity to make some comments on this matter.

The great majority of people claiming to be Christians, subscribe to belief in the practice of this rite of infant "baptism". We do not here question the sincerity of the paedobaptists—that many of them hold this rite in great veneration. Neither is it our purpose needlessly to give offence to their feelings. Our object is rather to show them that their veneration and strong feelings are misplaced. We rely on the New Testament scriptures to effect this.

### What the New Testament says

The New Testament is the Christian's law book. In it are found the "ALL THINGS" commanded by Jesus Christ to His Apostles. Conformably to their commission, they preached the gospel, made converts and taught them how to worship God and live holily justly and unblameably looking for the blessed hope of eternal life.

In all the New Testament there is no mention made of infants being or being made Christians. Naturally there is no record of infants being baptised. Baptism is for or unto the remission of sins. Infants have no sin, therefore are not subjects for baptism. Jesus says that those who would enter heaven must become as a little child. Infants and little children ARE already fit subjects for heaven. Jesus, the Saviour, is our authority. Those who practice infant baptism, baptise the infant into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; but the Heavenly Father never commanded it, the Son never taught it, the Holy Spirit never authorised it. The Apostles never practised it, nor any Christians in the New Testament record.

Therefore, it is not from heaven. Its origin is of men. Jesus says that commandments and traditions of men are vain things. Traditions of men are transgressions of the commandments of God (see Matt. 15:1-14). Where the will of man is honoured the will of God is ignored. This is called will-worship and is in contradistinction to spiritual worship—worship in spirit and in truth.

The belief in and practice of baptising infants is simply superstition. Such reverence and veneration are misplaced and unworthy of any one who would be a follower of Jesus. The lovely baby is without sin and is a fit subject for the kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 18:3). Infant baptism is sinful because it is without faith (see Rom. 14:23). "Faith cometh by hearing the word of God", not by hearing the word of men. Belief or faith precedes baptism, but infants cannot exercise faith (Mark 16:15 and 16; Heb. 11:5 and 6).

#### What is necessary before Baptism

Repentance must precede baptism, but infants have not the power to repent and are without sin. Conviction of sin must precede baptism, but infants cannot experience this. Baptism must follow a confession of faith in Christ with all the heart, but infants cannot make such confession. Baptism is for those "whosoever will". Infant baptism is practised not only without the *will* of the child, but generally *against* its will!

Those who teach and encourage infant baptism give specious reasons for doing so. The chief one is that we read in the Acts of Apostles of households becoming converted. From this fact they make the unwarranted assumption that there *must* have been little children in them and that they would be baptised. In no account of household conversions do we find any mention of infants, or little children. We are not aware that any ages are given. That all in the households referred to were of an age to understand what was spoken by the Apostles and that they had the capacity to judge and act for themselves is apparent from what is said in each case.

In the case of Cornelius's household: he said to Peter, "Now therefore, are we all here present before God, *to hear all things that are commanded thee of God*" (Acts 10:33). The house of the Philippian jailor: we read, "And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and *to all that were in his house*" (Acts 16:32). Then verse 34 adds "He...rejoiced, *believing in God with all his house*". We can see from these examples that those included in the household were capable of *hearing, understanding, believing, repenting, confessing and obeying* the gospel. We might ask those who contend for infant baptism on account of these household conversions: Were Cornelius, Lydia and the jailor ever married? If married, did they have any children? Did they have any children under 12 years of age at the time the Apostles visited them? To answer in the affirmative any of these questions is to be wiser than what is written. We are warned against going beyond what is written.

We shall now notice that this rite claimed by its votaries to be Christian baptism is wrong in its action as well as in its subjects. Infant baptism is popularly performed by sprinkling water on the subject.

### Infant baptism is wrong in all respects

A very common argument in favour of sprinkling for baptism, is that the validity of the ordinance does not depend upon the quantity of water used in its administration. It is urged that as a small quantity of bread and wine is sufficient for the proper observance of the Lord's supper, so a small quantity of water is sufficient for baptism.

The weakness of this sophistry becomes apparent when we enquire what the action of baptism is. If the word itself means, as every Greek lexicon in the world says it does, IMMERSION, then the question is settled. It matters not how large or small the quantity of water, so long as the subject is *immersed* in it. We do not object to sprinkling on the ground that it is not valid baptism, but because *IT IS NOT BAPTISM AT ALL.*

Since all lexicographers agree that baptism means immersion, and since none of them says it means sprinkling, we simply bow to the unanimous voice of scholarship. This is not a question of interpretation but of translation. There is a Greek word (*RANTIZO*) which means to *sprinkle*; there is another (*BAPTIZO*) which means to *immerse*; and the latter is the word always used for the Christian ordinance. Every person merely sprinkled upon is, therefore, unbaptised. The validity of baptism (immersion) does not depend upon the quantity of water, but upon the state of the candidate's heart.

Infant baptism is not only a misnomer, but is a vain show. Respecting the infant, it is unaffected by it, being unconscious of the proceedings. Not so the sponsors and administrator; their acts are God-dishonouring inasmuch as God has not commanded it. "Give no heed to commandments of men, that turn from the truth" (Titus 1:14); "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice" (Jesus); "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved" (Jesus).

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