

WHAT ABOUT BAPTISM?

A Biblical Discussion between Billy Baptist and Peter Presbyterian



by

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DEDICATION

To my dearly beloved daughters, baptized and covenantally sealed in Name of the Triune God in early infancy:

To Johanna, who sang her first Psalms to His glory when not yet two years old; and to Annamarie, who has manifested a sweet spirit of general obedience as far back in her life as I can remember.

“I thank You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and have revealed them to babies! Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Your sight” (Matthew 11: 25-26).

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FOREWORD

One perceptive Presbyterian of an earlier day wrote:

I'm first a Christian, next a Catholic, then a Calvinist, fourth a Paedobaptist, and fifth a Presbyterian. I cannot reverse this order.... The first is the broadest, and is the foundation laid by Christ; but we are to build on that foundation, and, as we ascend, our outlook widens.¹

The Scottish Reformed Fellowship unhesitatingly endorses such an affirmation! It is their purpose to promote just such a full-orbed expression of the Reformed Faith, among the main tenets of which, it will be noted, is the practice of infant baptism -- paedobaptism.

Concerning the question of baptism there has been much controversy and division in the Christian Church, even amongst professed adherents of the Reformed Faith. In issuing this pamphlet, it is not our desire merely to fan the flames of controversy on the issue but rather to seek to answer seriously questions commonly raised against infant baptism by Baptist writers.

This purpose, we feel, Professor Nigel Lee has accomplished with typical perspicuity in this booklet,² constructed in the intriguing form of a conversation between a Presbyterian and a Baptist. Here we have a convincing and indeed comprehensive demonstration of the paedobaptist case, in terms not easily misunderstood.

Essentially, then, the purpose of sending forth this booklet is twofold: Firstly, to convince Baptists of the Scripturalness of the infant baptist position; and, secondly, to establish and instruct Presbyterians in this important aspect of their profession. May our great Covenant God be pleased to bless it to this end!

SCOTTISH REFORMED FELLOWSHIP,
Edinburgh.
January, 1976.

¹ John Duncan, *Colloquia Peripatetica*, 6th Ed., Edinburgh, 1907, p. 8.

² This is a revised form of the author's Afrikaans language edition, *Julle Doop Mos Verkeerd!* N.G. Kerk-Uitgewers, n.d. [1971].

WHAT ABOUT BAPTISM?

Billy Baptist: Mr. Peter Presbyterian! You and your wife claim to be Christians. But remember the words of that greater Peter at Jerusalem: “Repent and be baptized!” Have you yet obeyed Christ, by follow-ing Him through the waters of baptism “since ye believed?”¹

Peter Presbyterian: Yes, Mr. Billy Baptist, my wife and I have indeed been baptized - in tenderest infancy. Likewise our children. We have not, of course, been re-baptized since then. For God’s word teaches us that all re-baptisms are sinful, if not impossible.²

Baptism should never be repeated, not even if our (or your) ‘first’ and only actual baptism should prove to have been administered somewhat irregularly.² For a Christian can never be, or only have been, ‘half-baptized.’ After all, Christians have either been baptized validly and once for all, or else they have never been baptized validly at all. In the latter case, they still need baptizing.

B.: Re-baptism is no doubt sinful. For those of us who have been validly “baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death”; and the Saviour died indeed but once for our sins. Consequently, His death, and the water-baptism which symbolises it, can never be repeated.²

But believer’s baptism of consenting adults is not a re-baptism, for the simple reason that their previous ‘infant bap-tism’ was not truly or validly a baptism. Furthermore, the Greek word for baptism means ‘immersion.’ So inasmuch as you Presbyterians don’t immerse your babies at all but only have their little heads sprinkled with water, your so-called ‘infant baptism’ is actually no baptism at all. In addition there is also the other essential requirement that while you were infants, you did not consent to receiving these drops of water. Hence, you and your wife both still need to be baptized -- seeing that neither of you has ever been immersed as a believer!

P.: By ‘immersed’ I take it that you mean ‘submersed’? For one could conceivably have had part of one’s head ‘immersed’ or dipped into a baptismal font without ever having had one’s whole body ‘submersed.’ Anyway, where do you read in God’s Word that ‘baptize’ means ‘submerge’?

B.: Well, after all, Jesus Himself was baptized by ‘submersion’³ -- and baptized only after He had grown up, too. Don’t you want to follow His example?⁴

P.: We should remember that Jesus had Himself baptized as our Substitute, so that His baptism can never be imitated. You see, just as the adult first Adam fell into sin as the federal representative of all his children -- so too did the adult Jesus as the Second Adam have Himself baptized as the federal representative of all His children. For after the unclean sinners had been con-verted and baptized (whereby their sins were so to speak symbo-lically washed away in the waters of the Jordan), the pure and sinless Jesus submitted to baptism in the ‘sin-polluted’ waters of the Jordan. That indicates He took our sins upon Himself.⁵ But quite apart from this, I too could reason that inasmuch as Jesus was circumcised as an infant⁶ -- we we too should be baptized as infants. For baptism is the unbloody sign⁷ which replaced bloody circumcision after the death of Christ. Indeed, only unchristian and never-baptized Heathen and Jews and Muslims should ever be baptized as adults⁸ after their conversion to Christianity.

B.: Very well, let's forget about the case of Jesus' own baptism - though it's clear to me that the Saviour was definitely submersed. However, the Ethiopian eunuch was definitely submersed too. After all, we distinctly read that he went down into the water, was baptized, and then came up out of the water!⁹

P.: That's not quite what the text says. What God's word does say about this, however, is that "they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him. And when they were come up out of the water..."⁹

"Notice it says: that "they *both* went down into the water"; that the eunuch was baptized by Philip; and that they both then came up out of the water. Now, if you insist on deducing from all this that the eunuch was sub-mersed -- which is not actually stated -- then you should also be consistent and conclude that Philip too was submersed. But even you don't believe that -- do you?

Incidentally, the same applies in the case of the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. So that there is no proof that Jesus was submersed, either. In fact, at His baptism He seems to have been sealed as our great Prophet and Priest and King -- by being anointed with water poured upon His forehead.¹⁰

B.: But John the Baptist did baptize in the River Jordan and with "much water."¹¹ Surely that indicates that he necessarily submersed his converts - doesn't it?

P.: Not at all! There is no indication in Scripture that John - or any other baptizer - ever submersed anyone. In fact, there is far more indication that John the Baptist baptized by sprinkling. You see, the original Greek text does not say that John baptized people in the Jordan at Aenon near Salim because there was *deep* water or *much* water there, but "because there were many waters - *hudata polla* (plural) - there." It should also be noted that the Hebrew 'Aenon' ('*aynōn*) literally means 'pure fountains' or 'springs' - which rather precludes the possibility of submersion.

Nor do the prepositions used in expressions such as "in the Jordan" and "out of the water" *necessarily* imply submer-sion. For these same expressions are used in many Bible passages where the idea of submersion is totally excluded.

Thus, God's word declares that the Israelites "stood firm on dry ground in the midst of the Jordan" after they went "into the Jordan" and before they "came up out of the Jordan" and entered into the promised land.¹² And God's Word also declares that Elijah too passed through the Jordan "on dry ground" but poured out water on the altar representing all the tribes of Israel (together with their infants) -- just before all of them, both the penitent adults and their children, were sprinkled from above by the God-sent rain. And John 'is' Elijah!¹³

B.: Well, you will at least admit that Paul compares baptism to a burial in Romans and Colossians. And 'burial' does imply submersion, doesn't it?

P.: That isn't actually stated in God's word either! What is stated, however, is: "Don't you know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ, were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death"¹⁴ -- and: "buried with Him in baptism, in which also you have risen with Him."¹⁵

Now the chief thought here, is: “buried with Him.” Yet we know very well that Christ was not submersed under the earth in His burial, but laid down sideways on a ledge inside a cave or horizontally-excavated sepulchre -- after His body had been *sprinkled* with spices.¹⁶

Elsewhere, we read that “as many of you as have been baptized into Christ -- have put on Christ.”¹⁷ There, baptism is compared to putting on clothes -- and even babies wear clothes! This too simply cannot be reconciled with submersion.

However, I don't believe that all these texts are primarily dealing with the mode or *manner* of baptism at all, but rather with the holy significance or *meaning* of baptism itself. The thought here is that we who have been baptized, have been incorporated into Christ's death and resurrection. So that through Christ's death and resurrection we too are to be dead to sin but alive unto God, and henceforth to live for Him alone. Incidentally, the original Greek word translated 'buried' in Romans and Colossians -- *thapto* -- doesn't mean 'to let downwards into an earthly grave' and hence to submerge. It merely means 'to honour with funeral rites' -- irrespective of the manner of disposal of the body.

B.: Wait a minute! Here are a few more texts for you. In First Corinthians, we read that the Israelites “were all baptized unto (or into) Moses in the cloud and in the sea.”¹⁸ And in the First Epistle of Peter, we are told that baptism is “the like figure” of the waters of the great flood.¹⁹

So you see, at the Exodus from Egypt the Israelites were baptized in the Red Sea. And the apostle Peter compared baptism with the great flood. That can only mean one thing: submersion in the Red Sea and in the waters of the flood!

P.: To the contrary. It was the Egyptians and not the Israelites that were submersed in the Red sea -- and yet that submersion was no baptism, because it was not the Egyptians who were baptized.²⁰ As you know, it was the Israelites who (together with their children)²¹ were then all “baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.” That occurred when “the clouds poured out water” on them.²² Furthermore, that Mosaic baptism administered by the downpour from the clouds, naturally precluded the submer-sion of the Israelites. For God's Word declares that “by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.”²²

And as far as the great flood is concerned, we should realize that God's word declares that Noah and his entire household were - like the later Israelites at the Red Sea - baptized²³ from the clouds by rainwater sprinkled on them from above.²⁴ Yet the unbelievers -- just like Pharaoh's people later at the beginning of the exodus -- were indeed submersed but never baptized.²⁵

B.: I can't understand that I've never thought of all this before! How's it possible that I've been reading all these texts so differently all these years, and never realized it? But now, you've given me a lot to think about! However, tell me this: if baptism doesn't mean submersion, what does it mean?

P.: The original Greek word for 'submersion' - *kataduō* - is never used in Scripture at all, neither in respect of baptism nor in respect of anything else. But the original Greek word used in Scripture for 'baptize' - *baptizō* - just means 'baptize.' The word as such does not give any indication of the manner in which baptism should be performed. That - the manner of baptism - is something which can be established only from the context in which this word 'baptism' is used, in the various places in Scripture where it occurs.

B.: But why, then, do you Presbyterians insist on sprinkling as the mode of baptism?

P.: Well, we don't say that sprinkling alone constitutes a valid baptism, but we do believe that sprinkling is the best way to baptize. You see, baptism is like rain. The apostle Peter compares baptism with the sprinkling or downpour of the rainwater on the roof of the ark.²⁶

In the book of Acts, Luke also compares being "baptized with the Holy Ghost" with the coming of rain from above.²⁷ And the Old Testament prophets repeatedly forecast the outpouring of the blessings of the New Testament like rainwater from on high. As a matter of fact, it was precisely the reading of the prophecy of Isaiah - "so shall He sprinkle many nations" and the sentences following it -- that caused the Ethiopian eunuch to request of Philip: "See, here is water! What hinders me to be baptized?"²⁸

Therefore, supported also by a host of other similar Bible passages as well, we Presbyterians baptize in a way which reminds one of falling rainwater.²⁹

B.: Very well, I'll have to admit that baptism by sprinkling is perhaps more in accord with the Scriptures than baptism by submersion. But so far I'm not at all convinced of the Scripturalness of the baptism of infants! Where in the Bible do you read that a single baby was ever baptized?

P.: Well, you first tell me something. Do you believe that the doctrines of the Trinity and the Sunday Sabbath are Scriptural'?

B.: Of course!

P.: So do I. But can you give me a single Bible verse which all by itself establishes that God is Triune, or that Sunday is now the Sabbath?

B.: No, I must admit that I can't think of any such texts right now. But if we take the Bible as a whole, it is very clear that God is Triune and that Sunday is now the Sabbath.

P.: Exactly! And precisely the same applies in the case of infant baptism. But tell me -- does your Church allow its women to celebrate the Lord's Supper?

B.: Of course!

P.: So does the Presbyterian Church. But where in the Bible do you read that any women ever participated in the Lord's Supper?

B.: I must admit I never thought of that before! Yet we know that faithful women used the Passover in Old Testament times, and that the Lord's Supper replaces the Passover in New Testament times. So deduce that faithful women should be allowed to receive the Supper too.

P.: Actually, the Old Testament nowhere teaches that; for the Passover was not to be given to for those who had not been circumcised.³⁰ Yet precisely if you believe women nevertheless used the Passover -- you should even more acknowledge that little children born into faithful households received circumcision during Old Testament times,³¹ and that New Testament baptism has now replaced cir-cumcision.³² So we can also deduce from this that little child-ren born of faithful parents should receive baptism too. After all, you can hardly make this kind of deduction in respect

of the one sacrament and not predicate it also of the other! No Christian Church is about to abandon dispensing the Lord's Supper to faithful women - is it?

B.: Well, if baptism really did replace circumcision -- which is administrable only to males -- would you please tell me why you Presbyterians also baptize little girls as well as little boys, even though it was only the little boys that were circumcised in former times?

P.: It should be remembered that even circumcision was instituted only as a sign of purification from sin,³³ and that sin origin-ally polluted the human race, not only through the federal transgression of Adam as the male head of the entire human race but circumstantially through the disobedience of woman.³⁴ As a result of sin, woman was subjected to man's rule, and in this -- on account of her leading role in bringing about the fall -- she forfeited any right she may otherwise have had to the sign of circumcision which foreshadowed the atoning death of Christ,³⁵ and which in later times was given only to faithful males and their male infants as the sign of faith.³⁶

But as soon as Jesus Christ - the seed of the woman³⁷ - came and effected redemption, faithful women too thenceforth received the sign of faith. The old sign of circumcision was accordingly replaced immediately after Christ's atoning death by the unbloody sign of baptism which, unlike circumcision, can easily be administered to the female sex and was so administered to such women as believed³⁸ -- and, by implication, also to their little girls. All this is, of course, a dramatic indication of the way in which faithful woman has now been restored to her original position alongside her husband as a helpmate for him.

B.: But why then do Presbyterians only baptize male and female infants and not male and female adults?

P.: Not so! Presbyterians don't baptize children only. Actually, we baptize whole households as soon as the heads thereof profess their faith in Christ. Of course, households consist not only of adults, but usually also of children and frequently even of babies which are never excluded from the household and consequently are never to be excluded from the baptism of households either.³⁹

Hence, we baptize such parents together with their little children. After a few generations in an increasingly Christian environment, infant baptism becomes the rule and adult baptism the exception -- in a long-established Church. But on the mission field, even today adults -- together with their children and infants -- are frequently baptized in our Church. Indeed, even in the home Church adult baptism is administered to converted atheists or converted Jews, or to those professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who were never baptized in infancy on account of the erroneous viewpoint of their otherwise faithful Christian parents.

All this, incidentally, is quite easy to understand when one grasps that it was probably only adults that were circumcised at the time the rite was instituted. Then, Abraham was circumcised at ninety-nine years of age, together with his more than three-hundred adult servants and his thirteen-year-old son Ishmael. His younger son Isaac, however, was later circumcised when only eight days old -- as too were Isaac's own children later, and later still also their children, when infant circumcision became more and more the rule and adult circumcision became more and more the exception. So too, infant baptism rather than adult baptism has become the rule in established churches today. For baptism has now replaced circumcision.⁴⁰

B.: But wasn't circumcision merely a sign of national and earthly promises to Abraham and his descendants, and not a sign of international and heavenly blessings?

P.: That is not so. God's Word very clearly teaches us that circumcision was a *Christian sign of faith* for the *whole of life*.⁴¹ As such it naturally sealed national and earthly promises too. This it did in a spiritual manner -- while also at the same time sealing the international and heavenly promises made to Abra-ham and his faithful descendants too, even in their infancy. Similarly, these 'national' and 'earthly' promises are not only being enjoyed right now in the Christian Church in our present world, but they will also be enjoyed by those who faithfully bear the Name of the Lamb on their (triumphantly-sealed) foreheads even in the future Canaan and in the New Jerusalem hereafter - first in heaven above and then finally here on earth (in heaven-on-earth) after our world's ultimate renewal unto all eternity.⁴²

B.: Well, all of this is very interesting! But don't Presbyterians baptize all little infants whose (sometimes unfaithful) parents come and request it?

P.: No, at least not *consistent* Presbyterians. That's the Roman Catholic viewpoint, for they believe that all unbaptized people and even all unbaptized infants are lost -- because, in their view, only baptism washes away man's sins. We (consistent) Presbyterians, however, believe that only the blood of Christ washes away our sins (through the operation of the Holy Spirit either before, or during, or after, baptism) -- but never through the agency of the baptismal water as such.

For this reason, we never baptize dying infants - or dying adults - and we baptize only those infants whose parent(s) profess(es) to be (a) Christian(s). We don't baptize even the infants of Presbyterians -- if the parents concerned have renounced the faith or lapsed into gross indifference. For while John the Baptist did baptize the nation of Israel -- and hence perhaps the majority of Israelites after credible profession of faith in the coming Christ, together with their children -- he never baptized the outspokenly unbelieving Pharisees and lawyers or their children.⁴³

Only if at least one of the parents is a professing Christian, will we baptize their child. "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the (believing) wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the (believing) husband; else were your children unclean; but now (because the faithful parent has sanctified the faithless parent *in respect* of the faithful status of the conceived children) are they (namely, such *children*) holy"⁴⁴ -- and therefore obligated to receive holy baptism.

B.: But if the 'holy' child is to be baptized, shouldn't Presbyterians also baptize the unbelieving parent whom the believing parent has 'sanctified'?

P.: No, they shouldn't. At least, not until the believing spouse or someone else shall 'save' that unbelieving spouse by leading him or her to Christ.³⁶ For the above text⁴⁴ does *not* mean that the faithless parent is saved or is baptizable just because the other parent is a believer. For baptism is only for the true *believers* and *their* children -- not for unbelievers and their faithless children. The faithless parent with a believing spouse is 'sanctified' only in respect of the faithful parent's 'overshadowing' and neutralizing the faithless parent's influence on the child.

But it does mean that all infants born of at least one faithful parent are holy and baptizable (and even saved, in the event of their dying in tenderest infancy). For they take their salvational status from the believing parent, whose influence over the children predominates even when the other parent is an unbeliever.

B.: But how can you claim that such little babies are already 'saved'?

P.: Well, Christ cleanses these covenantal infants by the operation of His Holy Spirit through the sanctifying parent(s), so that even the faithlessness of one of the parents cannot thwart the gracious operation of the influence of the other (faithful) parent in the lives of their infants -- and particularly in the lives of such of their infants as die in infancy. That the infants and even the grandchildren of believers are not merely 'sanctifiable' (like the unbelieving spouse of a believing spouse) but actually 'holy' (like the believing child of a believing parent) -- is evident. For they do not, like heathen children, have to be brought from *outside* the covenant *into* the Lord. No! As Christian children having been conceived and born *inside* the covenant, they are to be brought up *inside* the covenant "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."⁴⁵

B.: But are you saying that covenantal infants don't need converting from unbelief to faith in Christ?

P.: It's true that even covenantal infants need 'repeated conversions' from their sins towards Christ and virtues, and that their God-given faith in Christ constantly needs challenging and deepening.⁴⁶ But it is hardly true that they need the same *quality* of conversion as do unbelievers and their children. Timothy, for example, was born of a believing mother and raised in the true faith from his mother's womb and even from his grandmother's womb, as it were -- and taught the Holy Scriptures from earliest childhood.⁴⁷

Moreover, there is no Scriptural account whatsoever of Timothy's (or of any other covenant child's) 'conversion' from rank unbelief to Christianity or to Christ (as distinct from Paul's constant injunctions to him to serve the Lord continually and more and more dedicatedly). Indeed, even Manasseh, the wicked son of the godly Hezekiah, "knew that the Lord He was God" -- at the time of his adult (re-)conversion when "he besought the Lord *his* God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers."⁴⁸

So you see, Timothy was conceived inside the covenant of grace and grew up in it from birth onwards. For he did "continue *in* faith" and he persevered in the covenant in which he was conceived and born, rather than having to be 'brought *into* ' that faith only in his later years.⁴⁷

All this is not merely the view of Calvin and of the Reformed Confessions and of great theologians, such as: Beza, Ursinus, John à Lasco, Voetius, James Buchanan, W.G.T. Shedd, A. Kuyper Sr. & Jr., H.H. Kuyper, N.L. Walker, B.B. Warfield, Herman Bavinck, P.Ch. Marcel, Berkouwer and John Murray.⁴⁹ More importantly, it is the view of Scripture too!⁴⁵

B.: Do you mean to tell me that *all* the parents who have come and presented their babies for baptism in the Presbyterian Church are automatically true Christians, and that their thus baptized children shall certainly be saved?

P.: Inasmuch as God solemnly promises to be the God of the believers and of their seed after them, it is only ingratitude and lack of a sufficient degree of faith which makes some parents falter at this point.⁵⁰ Here I believe we should be guided by the outward profession of faith and overt behaviour of the parents and their children.

After all, the infantly circumcised Isaac and Jacob and Joshua later promised that they and their children would serve the Lord. But the infantly circumcised Esau and Korah and the adultly circumcised Ishmael and their children all later apostasized and were therefore not truly saved. Such cases will unfortunately always be with us, right down to the final coming of Christ. But you

Baptists too have the same problem. Unless you would maintain that all those baptized in your Church are necessarily saved. But that's not your position. is it?

B.: No indeed! I must admit that we Baptists too have our Jshmaels and our Judases and our Demases. But tell me, don't Presbyterians believe that baptism is essential for the salvation of children -- and that the baptismal waters wash away their sins?

P.: No, as I've already said, that's Romanism, not Presbyterianism! God's Word declares that Christ sent (me) not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel!⁵¹ It's the Gospel that saves, not baptism! Therefore we believe that people should become believers before they get baptized, even as you do, and that people are saved by grace through faith alone even without baptism - just as the probably-unbaptized thief on the cross, and the certainly-uncircumcised children of the believers who lived and died before Abraham's time, and the obviously-uncircumcised females and little girls of all the believers who ever lived and died before the coming of Christ.⁵² But we also believe that all believers and their children ought to be baptized -- and that God will punish all who, or whose parents, have neglected to have that ordinance administered to themselves or to their children.⁵³

B.: But if you believe that baptism is only intended for true believers, why then do you Presbyterians also baptize and even especially baptize the little children of the believers? After all, how can a baby believe?

P.: It's perfectly true that very tiny babies are not able to say whether they believe in Christ or not. But it is not true that even newly-born infants are for this reason incapable of believing. After all, even adult deaf-mutes can *possess* faith, even if they can't always *profess* it. And we Presbyterians believe that even the little babies of godly parents can already receive the seed of faith -- though the further growth of that seed may only become outwardly visible at a later stage.⁴⁵

Remember, Jeremiah and John the Baptist and Timothy were all sanctified from their mothers' wombs even before they were born.⁵⁴ David remarked: "Out of the mouth of babies and sucklings, You have ordained strength"; and Joel related how that even "those that suck the breasts" were with the sanctified "congregation" of the people of God.⁵⁵ So too, Jesus Himself referred to a 'little child' as "one of these little ones which believe in Me" -- and also thanked His Father for *revealing* the mysteries of faith even to *babies*.⁵⁶

Further, we should never forget that God Himself commanded that circumcision, like baptism, the sign and seal of faith,⁵⁷ be administered to the covenantal baby Isaac when he was only eight days old -- and to all succeeding Jsraelitic babies when they too were but eight days of age.³¹ So you see, it is not really a question of the covenantal infants 'finding' the Lord. To the contrary, He is the Good Shepherd, who came to 'find' even the covenantal infants who were lost, but who believe in Him precisely because He has found them.⁵⁸

B.: But how can a little baby believe? How can infants receive faith?

P.: Well, faith is never of ourselves, but is solely a gift of God. It can be implanted in us only by the sovereign and unmerited operation of the Holy Ghost alone. Now without faith it is impos-sible for anybody (including an infant) to please God, and unless a person be born again, he cannot even see and still less enter into God's kingdom.⁵⁹ Hence, even children must be regenerated and given faith before they can be saved.

However, God's Word declares that the Lord sanctifies the offspring of truly godly parents even from the time of their conception prior to their birth -- and before their death actually regenerates and gives faith to such of them as die in infancy.⁶⁰ After all, if we all fell into sin even while we were in the 'loins' of Adam, as it were - should one not expect God to sanctify is elect children even when they are still in the 'loins' of their elect parents?⁶¹

B.: But aren't *all* babies saved on account of their innocence -- at least up until the time they commit their first wilful sin?

P.: No! God's Word teaches us that all little children -- even those born of believing parents -- are conceived in sin and shapen in iniquity and born of fallen parents⁶² -- so that they cannot *see* and still less *enter into* the Kingdom of God, unless they first be born again.⁵⁹ Even though unborn babies possibly have not yet committed actual sins, they nevertheless all inherit original in -- and original sin is *sin*!

But with the Bible we also believe that the little children of believers can be regenerated even while babies, as too did the great Baptist theologian A. H. Strong..⁶³ Otherwise, how could such babies possibly be saved when they die in early infancy,⁴⁵ as sometimes occurs even today, and as very frequently happened before the advent of modern medicine?

Naturally, when the children of believers do not die in their childhood, but grow up, they must of course (as did the infantly-circumcised Isaac and Jacob) each for himself come to mature faith and personal profession of faith and to repeated turning away from sin and (re-)conversion to the Lord and to circum-cision of their hearts and ears and lips.⁶⁴ If none of this happens, they must ultimately be regarded as lost - as was the infantly-circumcised but faithless adult Esau.⁶⁵

B.: But what about the little children of the unbelievers? I thought God regards all children in the same light, irrespective of whether or not their parents are believers!

P.: That is not the teaching of Holy Scripture. Certainly God may sovereignly regenerate whom He wishes, and we should fer-vently desire that He may indeed be pleased to regenerate all He has fore-ordained even from among the Heathen and their children. But nevertheless, God's Word teaches us very clearly that the little children of unbelievers are unclean."

That is why the little children of the unbelievers perished during the great flood when they were totally submersed together with their parents -- even while Noah and his children were being saved inside the ark and being 'baptized' by the downpour from above.²⁶ That is why the firstborn of the Egyptians perished during the tenth plague and why many of them were submersed in the Red Sea -- while the firstborn of the Israelites, provided their parents personally saw to it that the blood of the passover lamb was sprinkled on the entrances of the houses, were saved; and shortly thereafter, while still infants, baptized together with their parents in the rain clouds at the Red Sea.⁶⁷

That is why God visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations of them that hate Him; but also shows mercy unto thousands [of generations] of them that love Him, and keep His commandments.⁶⁸ And that is why we Presbyterians baptize the little children of professing Christians as a 'holy seed'⁶⁹ -- while we do not baptize the little children of professing unbelievers, and Jews and Heathen.⁴³ What God has put asunder -- namely Heathen children and Christian children - let no man join together!

What God hath pronounced unclean, don't you pronounce to be holy!⁴⁵ Thus taught Calvin⁷⁰ and thus too teaches our *Westminster Directory*⁷¹ -- because thus says the Scripture!⁷²

B.: But I'm a Christian believer, and not a Heathen! So I sup-pose that means my children too should be baptized, doesn't it?

P.: Yes, of course! And inasmuch as your own Baptist Church does not believe in household baptism, our own Presbyterian Church is ready and eager to assist you -- should you and your wife together with your children desire to become members of our denomination. Don't by any further unnecessary delay in having your children baptized, continue to break the Covenant of grace and run the danger of you and your children being cut off from the people of God! Scripture. Calvin, and our Reformed Confessions all solemnly warn us not to do this.⁷³

Have your children baptized as soon as possible, and then bring them up in the nur-ture and admonition of the Lord from tenderest infancy.⁷⁴ Repent of your ignorance, and negligence, and embrace all the counsel of God⁷⁵ -- which includes infant baptism. For listen to the Spirit-inspired words of the apostle Peter: "Repent, and be baptized! ... For the promise is unto you, and to your children!"⁷⁶

B.: But if my family does join the Presbyterian Church, won't my wife and I, who have both already been submerged, have to be baptized again - this time by sprinkling?

P.: No, we Presbyterians are not Re-baptists! As Baptists - like Calvin's wife before she embraced the Reformed Faith⁷⁷ -- you and your wife have already validly been baptized in the Name of the Triune God, even though it was only by way of submersion. Even if you had been baptized in the Romish Church by a heretical though trinitarian priest -- as was John Calvin -- we would still recognize your baptism as valid.

After all, there is only one water-baptism in the last analysis -- namely, that administered in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. The chief point is surely not how much water you were baptized with, but whether you believe in the Saviour and, less importantly -- whether you have also been baptized with water (either before or after your conversion) in the saving Name of the Triune God, with the baptism of the Lord Jesus Christ.⁷⁸

B.: Many thanks for your trouble. You've convinced me from God's own Word! Now I would like to become a Paedobaptist, together with my whole family.

P.: You're very welcome. If you like, I'll ask our Minister, and our Ruling Elder for the district you live in, to come and visit you soon about this matter. When they do, I'm sure they'll assure you: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shalt be saved, and your household!"⁷⁹ Then your little children will be able to be baptized,⁸⁰ so that it can then be said of you too that "he...was baptized, he and all his, straightway... And...he...rejoiced, believing in God with all his house."⁸¹ Then you will no longer try to bring your as now still unbaptized children *into* the covenant of grace; but then you will raise your then baptized children *inside* the covenant in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.⁸²

B.: Thanks! And after that my children need never again feel embarrassed when anyone asks them: "What about baptism?"

NOTES

1. Acts 2:38; *cf.* Mark 1:9-10; 16:16; Acts 19:2-3.
2. Inasmuch as baptism replaced circumcision after Calvary, and inasmuch as circumcision (even when irregularly administered [as in Gen. 34 & Ex. 4 & Josh. 5 & I Sam. 18 *cf.* John 7:22-23: *etc.*] could by the very nature of the matter never be repeated -- re-circumcision (and analogously re-baptism too) was and is both impossible and improper. See Eph, 4: 5; Rom. 6:3-10; Col. 2:8-15. See too the Baptist A. H. Strong's *Systematic Theology* (London, 1956 rep.) p. 950.
3. Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-10.
4. I Peter 2:2.
5. Matt. 20:22; *cf.* Mark 10:38; *cf.* Isa. 53:4-6; I Peter 2:24.
6. Luke 2:22-24; *cf.* Lev. 02.
7. Col. 2:10-14; Rom. 4:11, 23-24, *etc.*
8. Matt. 3; Luke 3; Acts 2:10 & 11.
9. Acts 8: 38-39. It may be observed that the "certain water" (more accurately trans-lated "a little water") seen by the eunuch was "on the way that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, *which is desert*" (v. 26), and thus it is hardly likely that it was more than a shallow pool.
10. Matt. 3:16; Mark 1:10. On anointing prophets, priests and kings -- see I Kings 19:15-16; Ex. 29:7; Lev. 8:12; I Sam. 10:1 (*cf.* 9:16); 16:13; II Kings 9:2-3, *etc.* (*cf.* Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 3:1 *etc.*; I Tim, 5).
11. Mark 1:9; John 3:23.
12. Josh. 3:8,17; 4:22, (*cf.* 4:17-19); Ex. 14:21-22,29.
13. I Kings 17:3-5; 18:33-34, 44-45 (*cf.* Matt. 11:12-15).
14. Rom. 6:3-4.
15. Col. 2:12.
16. John 19:39-42.
17. Gal. 3:27.
18. I Cor.10:2.
19. I Peter 3:21.
20. Ex. 14:26-28; 15 :3-5, 10.
21. Ex. 12:13, 24-27.
22. Heb. 11:29; *cf.* Ex. 14:21-22,29; Ps. 66:6; 78:13; *etc.*
23. Gen. 6:17-18; *cf.* II Peter 3:20-21.
24. Gen. 7:4, 10-13.
25. Gen. 7:17-24; *cf.* II Peter 3:5-6.
26. I Peter 1:2; & 3:20-21.
27. Acts 2:1-4,16-18 *cf.* Joel 2:28-32 (*cf.* v. 23).
28. Acts 8:36 *cf.* Isa. 53:7-8 and 52:13.
29. I Peter 1:2; 3:20-21; Lev. 14:7,16,27, 51; Num. 8:7; 19:18, 21; Isa. 52:15; Ezek. 36:25; Heb.9:19; 10:22; *etc.*
30. Ex. 12:43-48; Luke 22:14*f.*
31. Gen. 17:9-24; 21:1-4; Luke 2:21; Phil. 3:5.
32. Matt. 28:19; Mark. 16:15-16; Col. 2:9-14; Rom. 6:1-4 (*cf.* 4:11); Gal. 3 (esp. vv. 24-29).
33. Gen. 17:9-14; Lev. 12; Deut.10:12-16;*cf.* Jer.4:4;6:10; Rom. 4:11.
34. Gen.3; II Cor. 11:3; I Tim. 2:14.
35. Rom. 15:8; Ex.. 4:8-31.
36. Rom. 4: 11; *cf.* Gen. 17: 8-27; Lev. 12: 2-6.
37. Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-6.
38. Acts 8:12; Gal. 3:27-28, *etc.*
39. Acts 16:14-15,30-33; I Cor. 1:16 (*cf.* 16:5); *cf.* Gen, 17:8-27.
40. *Cf.* Gen. 17:1, 23-27; 14:14; 21:2-4; Josh.5:2-10; *etc.* *Cf.* n, 39 above.
41. Rom. 41:11; Col.2:9-14
42. Gen. 17; Rom. 4:11; Heb. 11: 8-16; 12:22-24; 13:20-21; Rev. 21:22-27; 22:2-4.
43. Matt. 3:5*f.*; Luke 7:30.
44. I Cor. 7:14.
45. Eph. 6:1-4 (*cf.* 1:1); *cf.* Acts 2:38-39; Matt. 19:13-14; II Tim.,3:14-15 (*cf.* Ezra 9:2).
46. Gen. 17:9; Josh. 24:15; Rom. 4:18-25; 9:10-13; Heb. 12:16-17; Jude 10; *Westminster Confession* 16:2-3.
47. II Tim.3:14-15.
48. II Chron. 33:12-13.
49. *Cf.* Calvin's *Institutes* IV:15:21, his *Second Defence of the Sacrament in Answer to the Calumnies of Westphal* (1556), and his *Appendix to the Tract on the True Method of Reforming the Church* ("The offspring of believers are born holy, because their children, while yet in the womb, before they breathe the vital air, have been adopted into the covenant of eternal life"); *Belgic Confession* (1561) ch. 34; *Canons of Dordt* (1619), I:17; *Westminster Confession* (1647), ch. 28; Kramer's *Het Verband van Doop en Wedergeboorte* [The Connection between Baptism and Regeneration], Breukelen, Netherlands, 1897) for the views of Beza & Ursinus & á Lasco & Voetius, *etc.*; Buchanan's *The Office and Work of the Holy Spirit* (London 1966 rep. pp. 116-26); Shedd's *Dogmatic Theology*, (Grand Rapids, 1969 rep II:475-79); Kuyper Sr.:*E Voto Dordraceno* [From the Synod of Dordt] (Amsterdam 1894 III:50-57; Walker's *The Church Standing of Children*, (Edinhnrgh 1891); Warfield's *Presbyterian and Reformed Review*, (1892 pp. 181-82); Bavinck's *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* [Reformed Dogmatics] (Kampen 1930 IV:28*f.*, & n. 486); Marcel's *The Biblical Doctrine of Infant Baptism* (London 1953 pp. 220-29); Berkouwer's *Karl Barth en de Kinderdoop* [Karl Barth on Infant Baptism] (Kampen 1947) and his *De Sacramenten* [The Sacraments] (Kampen 1954); and John Murray's *Christian Baptism*, (Philadelphia 1962 p. 59).
50. Gen. 17:7-8; Ex. 6:7; Deut. 4:20; Rev. 21:7; Acts 8:33,21-23; Gal. 4:20-31; Rom. 9:7-8. *Cf.* John 6:70-75; Philemon 24 (with II Tim. 4:10).
51. I Cor. 1:17.
52. I Cor. 7:14; Heb. 6:1-2; Luke 23:40-43.
53. Luke 7:30; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; *cf.* *Westminster Confession*, 28:5.

54. Jer. 1:5; Luke 1:15, 41-44, 76, 80; II Tim. 1:3-5; 13:14-17; (cf. Gal. 1:15).
55. Ps. 8:2 (cf. Matt. 21:16); Joel 2:16 cf. Matt. 19:13-14. 56. Matt. 18:2-6; Mark 9:36f; Luke 18:15-17; 10:21.
57. Rom. 4:10-17. 58. John 10:14; Heb. 13:20.
59. Eph. 2:8-10; Heb. 11:6; John 3:3-8; Rom. 8:9-17; I Pet. 1:2-3, 23.
60. *West. Conf.* 10:3 "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ, through the Spirit."
61. Cf. n. 534 above and nn. 64-72 below. Cf. also the important words: "Children, by baptism....are Christians and federally holy before baptism. ... If he shall be taken out of this life in his infancy, the Lord...would be pleased to receive him up into glory" [*Westminster*] *Directory for the Public Worship of God: Baptism*.
62. Ps. 51:5; Gen. 3; Job 14:4; Rom. 5:12-15; Eph. 2:3.
63. Cf. Strong; *Systematic Theology*, pp. 661, 663 and 823.
64. Deut. 6:6-10; 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25-26; Rom. 2:28-29; Phil. 3:3; Rev. 2:4-5. Cf. too *Westminster Larger Catechism*, Q. & A. 167.
65. Heb. 12:16-17. 66. Cf. I Cor. 7:14.
67. Ex. 11:4-7; 12:12-13, 21-24, 29-33; cf. Heb. 11:28-29.
68. Ex. 20:5-6; Deut. 7:9; Ps. 105:6-10; Isa. 59:21.
69. Ezra 9:2; (Neh. 9:2, 8). Cf. the *West. Conf.* 24: 2-3.
70. "There is no doubt that our children are heirs of the life which He has promised us. And hence St. Paul says -- I Cor. 7:14 -- that God sanctifies them from their mothers womb, *to distinguish them from the children of pagans and unbelievers.*" John Calvin's *Form of Administering the Sacraments Composed for the Use of the Church of Geneva: Baptism* (emphasis mine -- F.N.L.).
71. "That children, by baptism, are solemnly received into the bosom of the visible church. *distinguished from the world and them that are without*, and united with believers." *Directory for the Public Worship of God: Baptism*.
72. Gen. 17:4-13, 24-27; 21:1-4; Ex. 11:4-7; 12:12-13; *etc.*; Rom. 11:16; I Cor. 7:14.
73. Gen. 17:14; Ex. 4:18-31; Josh. 5:2-10; Col. 2:9-14. Cf. Calvin's *Institutes*, IV:16:9 and *West. Conf.*, 28:1, 4, 5.
74. Deut. 6:7; 29:9-12; Joel 2:16; Eph. 6:1-4; Col. 3:20-21.
75. Acts 20:27. 76. Acts 2:38-39.
77. John Calvin was baptized in infancy in the Roman Catholic Church and never again (re-)baptized thereafter. His wife, Idelette, was submersed as an adult in an anabaptist sect in Holland, converted to the Reformed faith, married to Calvin, and was never, of course, re-baptized by sprinkling. Their oldest child was baptized by Calvin in their Reformed Church in Geneva, and subsequently died in early infancy. Their other children died at birth unbaptized, but sanctified by the blood of Christ. Cf. T. B. van Halsema's *This was John Calvin*, (Grand Rapids, 1959), pp. 96 & 121.
78. Acts 2:38, 41; 8:16, 26; 10:47; 18:8; 22:16; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27.
79. Acts 16:31. 80. Gen. 17:8-10; Acts 2:38-39; Rom. 4:11-13.
81. Acts 16:33-34. 82. Eph 6:3.

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