

ENDTIME ISSUES NEWSLETTER No. 198
“INFANT BAPTISM: Part 1”
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EXCITING NEWS: *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?*
WILL BE OUT BY APRIL 22, 2008 !!!

It is with great joy and a deep sense of gratitude to God that I announce the imminent release by April 22, 2008 of the long-awaited book *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* I delivered the 384 pages manuscript to the printer this past week and he has promised to print it in a record time of 12 days. The first 10,000 copies are scheduled for delivery at our home by April 22, 2008. As soon as we receive the shipment we will immediately process the pre-publication orders we have already received for over 5,000 copies.

The book has a very attractive, colorful cover, with pictures representing seven of the ten popular beliefs examined in the book. You can view the cover of *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* by clicking at this link: -----

Words fail to express my heartfelt gratitude to God and to fellow believers who have contributed to the realization of this project. Without the encouragement and the editorial help I have received from many, the publication of this book would have been delayed for months or even years. More than once I felt like shelving this manuscript, because I felt overwhelmed by the amount of research still needed to write the ten chapters. But several subscribers to this newsletter, have urged me not to give up, because our Adventist church urgently needs a book to help truth seekers to understand why their popular beliefs are biblical wrong, while our Adventist beliefs are biblically correct.

A month ago when I came back from a lecture tour in England, I was still desperately looking for a book editor to clean up the manuscript for publication. The few professional book editors at Andrews University were all overbooked. About ten subscribers to this newsletter had already suggested corrections to most of the ten chapters, but I dreaded the thought of spending long days comparing the proposed corrections and incorporating the legitimate ones into the final version.

Thus, as soon I came back from England, I felt impressed to call Bruce Closser, Ph. D., a Professor of English at Andrews University who has taught English composition for the past 30 years. He has edited a few book manuscripts while teaching full time. Providentially, Prof. Closser was home, while his colleagues of the English Department were away for the Spring Break. He graciously offered to take on this editing project by devoting two solid weeks to prepare the manuscript for publication. Words are inadequate to express my deep sense of gratitude to Prof. Closser for devoting so much of his time and skills to make my manuscript sound more English and less Italian.

The Story Behind *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?*

Sometimes the story behind a book is as interesting as the book itself. Let me share with you what compelled me to write *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* Three major factors stand out in my mind.

The first factor is the frequent discussions I have with Christians of different denominations about their beliefs. Participants at my weekend seminars, as well as subscribers to my Endtime Issues Newsletter, often ask me: Why are some of my beliefs biblically wrong? How can they be unbiblical, when they are held by the vast majority of Christians?

To answer these questions, I have devoted the past thirty years of my life researching and writing 18 books which examine some of today's popular beliefs from a biblical perspective. Furthermore, a large number of the 200 Endtime Issues Newsletters which I have emailed during the past 10 years to over 35,000 subscribers, examine popular beliefs historically and biblically. This book represents an expansion of several studies I posted in my newsletters. These are readily accessible at www.biblicalpherspectives.com/endtimeissues/

My Passion for Biblical and Historical Accuracy

The second factor is my passion for biblical and historical accuracy. An example is the five years I spent at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy, investigating for my doctoral dissertation the popular belief that the change from Sabbath to Sunday worship came about by the authority of Christ and the apostles to commemorate the Lord's Resurrection.

The findings of my dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday* are summarized in chapter 6 of this book, entitled “Sunday Sacredness.” My study shows that the popular belief of Sunday sacredness lacks both biblical and historical support. Historically, I found that the origin of Sunday observance began approximately one century after Christ’s death, during the reign of Emperor Hadrian (117-138), as a result of an interplay of political, social, pagan, and religious factors.

The conclusions of my investigation were well-accepted by the examining commission made up of five distinguished Jesuit scholars. An indication is the gold medal of Pope Paul VI awarded to me for earning the *summa cum laude* distinction in my school work and dissertation *From Sabbath to Sunday*. This experience has greatly encouraged me to re-examine the biblical validity and historical accuracy of other popular beliefs, such as those examined in this book.

The Demand for a Biblical Re-examination of Popular Beliefs

The third factor that has motivated me to write this book is the increasing demand for a study that can help sincere and open-minded Christians to test the validity of their beliefs on the basis of the normative authority of the Bible. More and more Christians today are questioning the biblical validity of some of their denominational beliefs. This is partly due to the new climate of intellectual freedom that encourages people to take a fresh look at social, political, and religious issues. In Western countries most people no longer feel bound to blindly accept the beliefs of their churches. They want to find out for themselves if what they have been taught is based on biblical teachings or on church traditions.

Take for example the popular belief in the immortality of the soul which is examined at length in chapter 2 of this book. For centuries most Christians have accepted and still accept as biblical truth the dualistic view of human nature, as consisting of a material, mortal body and a spiritual, immortal soul. In recent years, however, a host of Bible scholars, philosophers, and scientists have re-examined this belief and found it to be contrary to Scripture, reason and science. Over one hundred studies produced by Catholic and Protestant scholars are cited in my book *Immortality or Resurrection? A Biblical Study on Human Nature and Destiny*.

The massive scholarly assault on the traditional dualistic view of human nature, will eventually filter through the rank and file of Christian denominations. When this happens, it will cause considerable intellectual and personal crisis in the lives of Christians accustomed to believing that at death their souls break loose from their bodies and continue to exist either in the beatitude of paradise or in the torment of hell. Many Christians will be sorely disappointed to discover that their belief in life after death, has no biblical basis whatsoever. The Bible clearly teaches that the dead in Christ rest in the grave until resurrection morning.

What is true for the popular belief in the immortality of the soul is also true of other popular beliefs examined in this book: Purgatory, Hell as Eternal Torment, the Intercession of the Saints, the Mediation of Mary, Sunday Sacredness, Speaking in Tongues, Once Saved Always Saved, and Infant Baptism. Most of these popular beliefs trace their origin, not from Scripture, but from the Platonic dualistic view of human nature, consisting of a mortal body and an immortal soul. The adoption of this pagan belief in the second century, has had a devastating impact on Christian beliefs and practices.

Bible Scholars Find some Popular Beliefs to be Unbiblical

The ten popular beliefs examined in this book have been investigated by scholars of different persuasions. In most cases they found them to be contrary to biblical teachings. Some of the findings of these studies are cited in this book where a chapter is devoted to each popular belief.

There is no question that Biblical scholarship is bound to cause a great deal of existential anxiety to millions of Christians who will be surprised to discover that some of their popular and traditional beliefs lack biblical support.

The purpose of this study is not to intensify such anxiety, but to encourage all Christians committed to the normative authority of the Scripture, to re-examine their traditional beliefs and reject those which are proven to be unbiblical. The Christian hope for a personal and cosmic redemption must be grounded on the unmistakable teachings of God's Word, not on ecclesiastical traditions.

Importance of this Book on *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?*

This research project has been very expensive in time and money. During this past year I have invested an average of 15 hours a day on this manuscript, because I believe it is desperately needed to call out of Babylon many sincere people who are sincerely seeking to know and to do the revealed will of God.

There are million of sincere Christians who do not realize that most of their popular beliefs are biblically wrong, while our Adventist beliefs are biblically right. This book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* is designed to help these sincere Christians to re-examine their beliefs in the light of the normative authority of Scripture.

At this time our Adventist Church has not no compelling witnessing book that can help sincere people understand why their popular beliefs are biblically wrong, and our Adventist beliefs are biblically correct. This is what makes *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* so urgently needed. Adventists who have been looking for a book to give their friends who question about our Adventist beliefs, will be glad to know that finally such book is available. They will be glad to give to their friends *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* because the book exposes false teachings and affirms biblical truths in a calm, dispassionate, and objective way.

My Sincere Hope

I have written this book with the earnest desire to help Christians of all persuasions to re-examine their popular beliefs in the light of the normative authority of the Bible. At a time when most Christians still hold to popular beliefs that derive from human traditions rather than from biblical revelation, it is imperative to recover those biblical truths that God has revealed for our eternal salvation.

It is my fervent hope that this book, fruit of many months of dedicated research, will help Christians of all persuasions to “come out” of the Babylonian confusion of popular but unbiblical beliefs, and accept God’s glorious plan for our present life and our future destiny.

Special Pre-publication Offer of Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?

The book consists of 384 pages with a nice four colors, laminated cover which you can view by clicking at this link: ----- . The book is scheduled to come off the press in a few days by April 22, 2008.

At this time we wish to offer our readers the opportunity to place an order at the special pre-publication prices listed below. Your advanced order will offer you the opportunity to purchase the book at a special pre-publication discount. Your order will be processed as soon as the book comes out by April 22, 2008

1 copy of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$30.00 per copy. Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$10.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

10 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$10.00 per copy, postage paid, instead of the regular price of \$30.00. (\$100.00 for 10 copies). Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$40.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

30 copies (one case) of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$5.00 per copy (\$150.00 for 30 copies). Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$80.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

100 copies of *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at \$4.00 per copy, postage paid. (\$400.00 for 100 copies). Mailing expenses are included for the USA. Add \$160.00 for AIRMAIL postage to any overseas destination.

HOW TO ORDER *POPULAR BELIEFS: ARE THEY BIBLICAL?*

You can order *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* at the pre-publication prices given above, in four different ways:

(1) ONLINE: By clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=26_35

(2) PHONE: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) EMAIL: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) REGULAR MAIL: By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order as soon as the book comes off the press.

A SPECIAL DEDICATION SERVICE FOR THE NEW BOOK

On Friday evening, April 25, 2008 at 8:00 p. m., we are planning a simple dedication service for the new book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* The service will be held at our home located in 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103. If you live in Berrien Springs and would like to join our extended family for this dedication service of the new book, please call us at (269) 471-2915. We would like to have an idea of how many people plan to come so that I can autograph a gift copy of the new book for every person attending the service.

The idea of a dedication service for a new book, is not common in the Adventist church. We dedicate babies, not books, but for me the delivery of a new book that has engaged my time and efforts for one year, is like the delivery of a new baby. It is indeed a memorable experience in my life.

The inspiration for a dedication service came to me from the story of the eight sheet little paper called *Present Truth*. When the first issue came out in 1849 at the cost of great sacrifices, James White borrowed a horse and buggy to bring home the papers. Then, according to Ellen White, “The precious printed sheet were brought into the house and laid on the floor, and then a little group of interested ones were gathered in, and we knelt around the papers, and with humble hearts and many tears besought the Lord to let His blessing rest upon these messengers of truth” (Ellen White, *Christian Experiences and Teachings*, p. 129).

Like our Pioneers besought the Lord’s blessings upon the first issue of *Present Truth* containing fundamental Adventist beliefs, so I feel the need to invoke God’s blessing on my latest book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* The reason is that I sense that this book, more than my previous 17 books, will help sincere people understand why their popular beliefs are biblically wrong, and our Adventist beliefs are biblically correct.

If you live far away from Berrien Springs, Michigan, feel free to lift up in your prayers this timely book *Popular Beliefs: Are they Biblical?* May the Lord use this book to help Christians of all persuasions to “come out” of the Babylonian confusion of popular but unbiblical beliefs, and accept God’s glorious plan for our present life and our future destiny.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION TO NEWSLETTER NO. 198

This newsletter is excerpted from chapter 10 of the book *Popular Beliefs: Are They Biblical?* entitled “Infant Baptism.” The book is scheduled to be released in a few days, by April 22 - 2008. Due to its length, this important chapter is posted in two installments. This newsletter contains the first part of the chapter dealing with the biblical teachings on baptism and the arguments used to promote infant baptism. The next newsletter will cover the last part of the chapter which traces the historical origin and development of infant baptism.

By way of conclusion I reflect on some of the significant problems stemming from the belief and practice of infant baptism. We shall see that infant baptism has contributed to the ritualization of Christianity, the secularization of the church, and the fostering of a false security of salvation.

Researching this chapter has truly been an enlightening experience for me. The same has been true of each of the ten popular beliefs examined in the book. There was much that I knew, but much more that I did not know. For example, I was shocked by the verbal and physical ferocity with which Catholic and Protestant leaders (Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli), killed fellow Christians for the crime of baptizing or rebaptizing adult believers rather than infants. In many cases the execution was carried out by drowning the Anabaptists, that is the Re-baptizers, in the cold water of major rivers. These criminal acts raise serious questions about the Church leaders’ understanding and experience of the forgiving and transforming power of divine grace.

From a historical perspective, I have learned that infant baptism has done incalculable damage to the Christian Church. It eventually

changed radically the nature of the church from a community of faith, independent of secular society, into a religio-political organization coexistent with society. This led to the formation of a Christian empire and Christian nations. Christianity became a matter of heredity, not decision.

This chapter will help you to understand the untold harm infant baptism has done to the Christian faith. It has ritualized religion, secularized the church, obscured the New Testament's view of baptism, and it has created a false sense of security in the "magic" power of a few drops of waters sprinkled on the head of an infant.

Our challenge today is to help millions of sincere Christians who have been deceived by the false claims made about infant baptism to experience the "new birth" typified by baptism, by repenting of past sins, burying them in the watery grave of the baptismal fountain, and by being raised into a newness of life through Christ's saving grace.

To meet this challenge I have devoted long hours during this past year to examine biblically and historically ten of the most popular but unbiblical beliefs of our time. Now I can only hope and pray that the Lord will use this timely book to help Christians of all persuasions to "come out" of the Babylonian confusion of popular but unbiblical beliefs, and accept God's glorious plan for our present life and our future destiny.

"INFANT BAPTISM: Part 1"

Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi

Retired Professor of Theology, Andrews University

The importance of baptism in the New Testament is acknowledged by all Christians. In fact, more coverage is given to baptism than to the Lord's Supper. The first public appearance of Jesus was heralded by John's baptism. The first public act of Christ was to be baptized. One of Jesus' last recorded commands to his followers was "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19). The first evangelistic sermon of the apostolic church resulted in a mass-baptism.

In every case of conversion described in the book of Acts, baptism is mentioned. As G. R. Beasley-Murray, a Baptist scholar, observes: “Baptism is . . . a part of the proclamation of Christ. In an Apostolic sermon it comes as its logical conclusion.” In his epistles, Paul frequently reminded Christians of what happened to them when they were baptized and became members of Christ’s body, the church. Thus, he summoned them to behave accordingly! (Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 1:12-17; Rom 6:3-9; Eph 4:5; Col 2:12).

With the rare exception of churches like the Quakers and the Salvation Army, Christians of all denominations have regarded baptism as the rite of entrance into the church. Yet, despite the important role that baptism has played in the history of the church, no other institution has caused so much controversy, division, hostility, and mutual mistrust. In many ways the history of baptism is the story of the water that has divided and still divides Christians.

The issue is not only the meaning, but also the method or mode of baptism. Is baptism primarily a symbolic, public confession of faith or a sacrament that removes from the soul the guilt of the original sin? Should baptism be administered only to those who publicly profess to understand and accept fundamental Bible truths and express a personal commitment to Christ? Or, should baptism be administered also to infants who cannot answer questions about faith? Should baptism be practiced by immersion or by sprinkling drops of water over the head of a newborn baby?

Today most Christian churches practice infant baptism. Among them are the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Anglican Communion, the Lutherans, the Presbyterians, the Methodists, the Assyrian Church of the East, the Church of the Nazarene, the Reformed Churches in America, the United Church of Christ, and the Continental Reformed Churches.

The churches within the Protestant tradition that reject infant baptism include the Baptists, most Pentecostals, the Mennonites, the Plymouth Brethren, the Seventh-day Adventists, most non-denominational churches, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Christadelphians, and the Latter-day Saints. Comparatively speaking, the churches that practice infant baptism far outnumber those which baptize believing adults (“believer baptism”).

The Tragedy of the Reformation

Disagreements over the meaning and mode of baptism can be traced back to the Reformation. At that time Christians attacked each other verbally and physically with a ferocity totally at variance with Christ's command to "love one another" (John 15:12, 17). One of the tragedies of the Reformation is that its leading Reformers, Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli, killed fellow Christians for the crime of baptizing or rebaptizing adult believers rather than infants. Their criminal acts raise serious questions about their understanding and experience of the transforming power of divine grace.

One of the most revealing examples of the Reformers' intolerance is provided by the story of the tragic conflict which erupted in the sixteenth century between them and the promoters of adult baptism known as Anabaptists, which means "Re-baptizers." The Reformers were determined to preserve the Catholic practice of baptizing infants, though they gave a different meaning to the ordinance. By contrast, the Anabaptists rejected infant baptism, known as *paedobaptism*, from the Greek word *pais*, meaning "child."

The sixteenth century Anabaptists represented a large number of radical movements who condemned the Reformation as half-hearted and incomplete. They wanted to complete the reformation by returning to the teachings and practices of the Apostolic Church. They all rejected *paedobaptism* (infant baptism), and baptized or rebaptized only those who came to a decisive understanding of Bible truths and were prepared to make a personal commitment to Christ.

The influence of the Anabaptist Reformers survives today and can be seen in denominations like the Seventh-day Adventist church, which were once regarded as the lunatic fringe of Christendom. Now, however, some historians recognize that certain modern religious movements represent genuine Christian strands that rightfully challenge mainline denominations to reexamine their traditional teachings. For example, G. H. Williams, the British scholar who has painstakingly examined the writings of several modern religious movements, concludes: "Christians of many denominations are finding themselves . . . closer to the despised sectaries of the Reformation Era [such as Anabaptists] than to the classical defenders of a reformed *corpus christianum* [Reformation teachings]."

An Example of the Reformers' Intolerance

An example of the Reformers' intolerance toward Anabaptists is the trial and execution of Felix Manz, a Swiss leader of the movement. At his trial in January 1527, Felix Manz freely confessed to being a teacher of adult baptism, forbidden in Switzerland: "We bring together those who are willing to accept Christ, obey the Word, and follow in His footsteps. We unite them by baptism, and leave the rest to their present conviction."

The Clerk of the Courts wrote this explanatory comment in the records: "They do not allow Infant Baptism. In this way they will put an end to secular authority." This revealing comment shows the concern of the local government to preserve the practice of infant baptism in order to ensure the commitment of the people to secular authorities that controlled the state church. Being baptized as an infant into the state church meant being loyal and committed to the state for the rest of one's life.

Even more extraordinary is the outburst of Manz's accuser, Ulrich Zwingli, one of the leading Swiss Reformers. Speaking at the trial of Anabaptist Manz, Zwingli shouted: "Let him who talks about going under [the water by immersion] go under." What seemed to be poetic justice was carried out literally by the local authorities who condemned Felix Manz to death by drowning.

"Led into the boat, he was forced to sit up and his arms were passed around his bent knees and bound at the wrists. Next a stick was pushed between the knees and elbows to secure him in this position. The boat was rowed to the center of the [Limmat] river, and the helpless prisoner was thrown overboard, to choke in the dark, deep waters."

One wonders, How could Protestant spiritual leaders kill fellow Christians for the crime of obeying their understanding of biblical teachings regarding baptism or other doctrines? How could Calvin influence the Geneva's Council on October 24, 1553 to sentence to death by burning Michael Servetus for denying the Trinity and infant baptism? Regarding infant baptism, Servetus said: "It is an invention of the devil, an infernal falsity for the destruction of all Christianity." Servetus was well-known not only for his theological treatises, but also for his scientific discoveries. He was the first European to describe the function of pulmonary circulation of the blood—a discovery that was largely rejected at that time.

One wonders, how could such outrageous criminal acts happen just few years after the beginning of the Reformation in Europe? An answer is to be found in the prevailing misconception that fighting and suppressing “heretics” was more important than loving them. As the church of Ephesus in Revelation lost its first love in the process of fighting those “who call themselves apostles but are not” (Rev 2:2, 4), so Christians with a passion to fight perceived heretical teachings, often became heartless and brutal in the suppression of alleged heretics.

Thankfully, Christians today rarely attack each other physically over baptismal issues. The new climate of tolerance tends to downplay doctrinal differences, focusing instead on areas of cooperation such as joint action against social injustices. Doctrinal differences remain in a dormant condition like sleeping dogs.

But when a church becomes active, conducting evangelistic meetings, then doctrinal differences wake up and leap into action. Christians find themselves debating old questions: Is baptism necessary for salvation? Should baptism be administered only to those who profess faith through a clear understanding of fundamental Bible truths and are willing to express publicly their personal commitment to Christ? Or, should the church baptize infants of Christian parents who wish to give to their off-spring the assurance of belonging to the family of God? These are some of the questions we wish to address in this chapter which focuses primarily on the popular belief and practice of infant baptism.

Objectives of This Chapter

This chapter examines infant baptism, commonly called “paedobaptism,” from both a biblical and historical perspective. The chapter is divided into four major parts:

1. Infant Baptism in Scripture
2. An Evaluation of Arguments for Infant Baptism
3. Infant Baptism in History
4. Problems with Infant Baptism

Biblically, we seek to understand the New Testament teachings regarding baptism and their implications for infant baptism. We shall see that the wit-

ness of the New Testament does not support infant baptism because baptism is always linked to the command to repent and believe, something that infants cannot do. Moreover baptism represents the believer's identification with Christ's death and resurrection by dying to sin and being resurrected to a new life in Christ, an experience that innocent babies cannot have.

Historically, we shall trace the origin and theological development of infant baptism. We shall see that during the Middle Ages, infant baptism stood for the sacramental power of the Catholic Church while adult baptism was condemned as evangelical "heresy." During the Lutheran Reformation, infant baptism symbolized state Christianity while adult baptism represented evangelical reformatory movements, and those who practiced it were committed to restoring apostolic beliefs and practices.

Through Calvin's teachings, infant baptism came to represent a predestinarian view of the Gospel, while adult baptism reflected a strong belief in human freedom. The Anabaptists believed that Luther and Calvin did not take their 'Reformation' far enough. Thus, they rejected infant baptism as unbiblical because it served to perpetuate state churches filled with nominal Christians.

By way of conclusion we shall reflect on some of the significant problems that stem from the belief and practice of infant baptism. We shall see that infant baptism has contributed to the ritualization of Christianity and the secularization of the church, besides fostering a false security of salvation.

PART 1 INFANT BAPTISM IN SCRIPTURE

There is much confusion today about baptism in the various Christian denominations. Some practice infant baptism while others practice believers' baptism. Some baptize by *immersion* (dipping), while other by *aspersion* (sprinkling). Still other baptize by *affusion* (pouring). Some teach that baptism removes the stain of the original sin while other see baptism as being primarily a public confession of faith and personal commitment to Christ.

The confusion can hardly be attributed to a lack of biblical clarity on baptism. The Bible is abundantly clear on the meaning, mode, and results of baptism. The problem is the accumulation of ecclesiastical traditions that have gradually obscured the meaning and function of baptism over the centuries.

When the Reformers shouted *Sola Scriptura* and defended this principle tenaciously against Catholic teachings, it was inevitable that her teaching on baptism would be subjected to a serious examination in the light of the Scriptures. Diligent study led many Anabaptists to discover that the New Testament does not even mention infant baptism and knows nothing of all the ceremonies and traditions that gradually came to clothe the rite of baptism. Their study of Scripture led them to the conclusion that infant baptism could not be supported by the teachings of the Apostles.

In fact, the New Testament offers no evidence for infant baptism. This fact is recognized today almost unanimously by theologians and biblical scholars. Even Friedrich Schleiermacher, known as the Father of Modern Theology, openly stated: “All traces of infant baptism presumably found in the New Testament must first be put into it.”

Since our focus in this chapter is on the popular belief in infant baptism, we will limit our analysis to the major New Testament texts and reasons used for defending the validity of infant baptism.

John the Baptist Did not Baptize Infants

John the Baptist baptized penitent adults, not infants. His baptism was a water baptism of repentance, preparing the way for the coming of Messiah. It was administered to those who came with a penitent heart to seek forgiveness for their sins. It was a “believer’s baptism,” because he did not baptize infants. “John the Baptizer appeared in the wilderness preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins” (Mark 1:4).

John’s baptism was apparently similar to the proselyte baptism that was administered to Gentile converts to Judaism. In both instances, there are no indications that a water baptism of repentance was administered to infants. The reason is that babies are innocent and have no willful sin to confess and repent of.

Jesus Was Baptized as an Adult, not as an Infant.

The baptism of Jesus serves as a model for Christians to follow. He was baptized not as an infant, but as an adult “to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt 3:15). Jesus’ baptism as an adult gave this ordinance divine sanction (Matt 3:13-17; 21:25). Since Christ, the Sinless One, was baptized as an adult to

“fulfill all righteousness,” we who are sinners ought to follow His example by being baptized at an age when we can make an intelligent decision to accept Him as our personal Savior.

Christ’s Disciples did not Baptize Infants

Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples did administer a baptism similar to that of John the Baptist. They baptized those who repented of their sins and accepted by faith Christ as their personal Savior. It was a believer’s baptism (Acts 2:41; 8:12, 16; 10:48; 11:16; 18:8; 19:4). There is no evidence that they ever baptized infants.

Baptism is Always Linked to a Command to Repent and Believe

It is significant that baptism in the New Testament is always linked to the command to repent and believe in Christ, something that infants cannot do. On the day of Pentecost Peter said to the people: “Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. . . . So those who had received his word were baptized; and there were added that day about three thousand souls (Acts 2:38, 41).

This passage clearly indicates that repentance of sin and acceptance of Christ were the prerequisites for receiving baptism by the mass of believing Jews who eagerly accepted Jesus of Nazareth as their expected Messiah. Repentance requires a mature understanding of sin and a decision to turn away from it. This is something that infants cannot do.

A similar example is found in the conversion story of the Ethiopian eunuch. When he asked Philip: “See, here is water! What is to prevent my being baptized?” Philip responded: “If you believe with all your heart, you may.” And he answered and said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him” (Acts 8:36-38). This passage makes it abundantly clear that the condition for receiving baptism is belief in Christ. This condition excludes infants from being baptized because they are incapable of believing.

Instruction Precedes Baptism

At the end of His ministry Christ commanded His disciples: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” (Matt 28:19-20). In this statement Christ mentions three successive stages:

1. Make disciples of all nations.
2. Baptize those who become disciples.
3. Teach those who are baptized to observe Christ’s commandments.

Note that baptism is to be administered to those who become disciples and those who are baptized are to be taught to observe Christ’s commandments. Both of these conditions are beyond the power of children to fulfill.

In the same commission given in Mark 16:16, instruction and believing are given as the pre-conditions for baptism: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.”

Here baptism is linked to salvation, but not in the sense that it automatically guarantees salvation. The salvation or the condemnation of a person is not guaranteed by the ritual of baptism, but by what baptism represents, namely, a faith response to Christ and the acceptance of His provision of salvation. This is clearly indicated by the statement that people will be condemned, not for failing to be baptized, but for refusing to believe: “He who does not believe will be condemned.”

In Mark baptism is preceded by preaching and believing. The reason is that baptismal candidates must understand what they are expected to believe in. They must be taught what it means to be a follower of Christ both in terms of beliefs and practices. Obviously babies are not mentally and spiritually capable of being instructed and making a personal commitment to Christ.

The Meaning of the Word “Baptism Precludes Infant Baptism

The English word *baptize* comes from the Greek verb *baptizo*, which means “to deep in or under water.” When applied to water baptism, it signifies an immersion or dipping of a person under water.

Since the very meaning of the verb *baptize* presupposes the immersion of the believer under water – a practice attested in the New Testament and early Christian literature – babies can hardly be baptized by immersion without endangering their lives. This explains why baptism by sprinkling was introduced later on to accommodate babies. But as J. K. Howard observes, “the New Testament offers no evidence that sprinkling was ever an apostolic practice, indeed the evidence all points to it being a late introduction.”

Baptism Was Practiced by Immersion in the New Testament

The accounts of water baptism in the New Testament involve immersion of adults, not sprinkling of babies. We read that John baptized *in* the river Jordan (Matt 3:6; Mark 1:5) and “in Aenon near Salim, because there was *much water* there” (John 3:23). Only immersion requires “much water.” Jesus was baptized by immersion. We read that John baptized Jesus “*in* the Jordan” and after the baptism Jesus “*came up out* of the water” (Mark 1:9, 10; cf. Matt 3:16).

Baptism by immersion was also the normal practice of the Apostolic Church. We are told that when Philip the evangelist baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, they both “went into the water” and “came up out of the water” (Acts 8:38-39). Baptism by immersion precludes the baptism of babies because they are too young to be immersed under water without risking their health. This is a reason why there are no instances of infant baptism in the New Testament.

Baptism Is an Appeal to God for a Good Conscience

In the New Testament, baptism is not a mere water ritual, but an outward expression of an inward appeal to God for a clear conscience: “Baptism, which corresponds to this [Noah’s family saved through the flood’s water], now saves you, not as removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet 3:21).

Baptism is valid only when it represents a sincere appeal to God for a change of heart and mind (Rom 12:2). It saves in the same ways as the confession of the lips saves in Romans 10:9: “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.” Since infants are too young to appeal to God for a change of

heart and to confess their belief in Jesus Christ, their baptism by sprinkling is a meaningless ritual devoid of biblical support.

Baptism Symbolizes Death to Sin and Resurrection to a New Life

While the Gospels and Acts report the incidents of baptism, Paul expands the deeper theological meaning of baptism. For example, he explains that through baptism the believer identifies with Christ’s death and resurrection. “Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:3-4).

Through baptism a believer symbolically enters into an intimate relationship with Christ. Howard notes: “In the symbolic act of baptism, the believer enters into the death of Christ, and in a real sense that death becomes his death; and he enters into the resurrection of Christ, and that resurrection becomes his resurrection.”

How does a believer identify with Christ’s death and resurrection? By symbolically burying his sins in the watery grave and being raised into a newness of life. Paul explains that in baptism “our old self was crucified with him so that the sinful body might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin” (Rom 6:6). “We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

This profound theological meaning of baptism as identification with Christ’s death and resurrection by dying to sin and being raised by faith into newness of life is obviously incomprehensible to an infant. A new born baby cannot identify through baptism with Christ’s death and resurrection, nor can he experience death to sin and resurrection to a newness of life. No infant can be buried with Christ in baptism and raised up with Him through faith.

Baptism Presupposes a Conversion Unknown to Innocent Infants

Baptism incorporates believers into the church within the context of a conversion experience known as “new birth,” not “infant birth.” This is why in the New Testament *believers*, not infants, were baptized — “both *men* and

women” (Acts 8:12, 13, 29-38; 9:17-18; 1 Cor 1:14). As Karl Barth admits, “Nowhere in the New Testament is infant baptism either permitted or commanded.” Similarly, G. R. Beasley-Murray concludes: “I find myself unable to recognize in infant baptism the baptism of the New Testament Church.”

Since innocent infants cannot experience conversion, they do not qualify for baptism. This does not mean that they are excluded from the new covenant community. Jesus included them in His kingdom of grace, saying: “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them; for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven. And he laid his hands on them” (Matt 19:15).

Jesus never suggested that unless children were baptized and had the stain of the original sin removed from their souls, they could not become members of the kingdom of heaven. Instead, pointing to unbaptized children, He said: “to such belongs the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 19:15). The kingdom of heaven belongs to children not because of their infant baptism, but because their state of innocence precludes the willful sinning of adults who need a conversion experience. Believing parents fulfill a vital role in guiding their children into a relationship with Christ that will eventually lead them to baptism.

Conclusion

Infant baptism is unknown in the New Testament simple because at a tender age infants cannot fulfill the conditions of baptism, namely, instruction, repentance, acceptance of Christ as their personal Savior, and conversion by dying to a life of sin and being risen to a newness of life.

Baptism presupposes a conversion (“new birth”) experience unknown to infants. Innocent infants are unaware of sinful tendencies in their lives; consequently, they cannot be expected to repent of their sins and to accept by faith Christ as their personal Savior.

Baptism marks one’s entrance into God’s kingdom. This mark is signified by a heart-change manifested in repentance and faith-acceptance of Christ. By receiving baptism, believers identify with Christ’s death and resurrection by symbolically burying their sins in the watery grave and being raised into a newness of life (Rom 6:4-6). This profound theological meaning of baptism is obviously incomprehensible to an infant.

At what age should young people be baptized? No hard and fast rule can be laid down because some young people are ready for baptism at an earlier age than others. The youth can be baptized when they understand the meaning of baptism and are willing to surrender their lives to Christ by living according to the teaching of God's Word. Parents play a vital role in fostering the spiritual growth and character development of their children.

PART 2
AN EVALUATION OF THE ARGUMENTS
FOR INFANT BAPTISM

To grasp the disagreement between Infant Baptists, known also as *paedobaptists*, and Believers' Baptist, called also *credobaptists*, one needs to understand the *roots* of the disagreement. This is to be found in a different understanding of the nature of faith, the role of baptism in salvation, the nature of grace, and the function of the sacraments.

Simply stated, Credobaptists view baptism as a public confession of faith which symbolically tells the world that one is a Christian. Only those who have faith in Christ become members of God's new covenantal community, the church, through baptism. Baptism is merely a symbol that does not convey grace.

By contrast, Paedobaptists generally agree that baptism is a sign that a person is a member of God's covenant community which includes both believers and children of believers. Baptism is not merely a symbol but a channel of grace through which God conveys spiritual power, unmerited favor, and for Catholics, the removal from the soul of the stain of original sin.

If baptism is a sign that a person is a member of God's covenant community of faith, then, Infant Baptists contend, children of believers must be baptized to become members of that community. In other words, baptism is seen as a passport, a sign that you are a member of a particular country, and if a child is a member of that country, he should be allowed to have a passport. We shall now see that this concept is foreign to Scripture. It largely derives from a misunderstanding of the relationship between circumcision and baptism.

Infant Baptism is Largely Based on the Covenant Theology

We have now arrived at the critical difference between Infant Baptists and Believers' Baptists, which is to be found in the different understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Covenant. Infant Baptists develop their belief out of their so-called Covenant Theology. Supporters of the Covenant Theology reject the distinction between the Old and New Covenants. They maintain that the Bible knows only one covenant of grace. This is interpreted to mean that the blessings of circumcision find their counterpart in infant baptism.

This belief in the one covenant of grace is common to all Reformed theologians. They apply this belief to infant baptism by claiming that whenever God makes a covenant with men and women, He always includes their children in the blessings of the covenant. In the New Testament children are included in God's covenant with their parents. Support for this conclusion is drawn largely from the stories of household baptism to be examined shortly.

Does Infant Baptism Correspond to Circumcision?

Reformed theologians maintain that baptism in the New Covenant follows the same design and function of circumcision in the Old Covenant. All newborn male Jews were to be circumcised to become part of the covenant community of Israel. The sign of circumcision was not dependent upon the faith of the parents insofar as eternal life was concerned. Parents were simply expected to obey the law of circumcision, to ensure that their sons through circumcision would become recipients of the covenantal blessings of land and prosperity promised to Abraham.

Infant Baptists believe that the New Testament baptism is the counterpart of the Old Testament circumcision. Just as the Passover festival was replaced by the Lord's Supper, so circumcision was replaced by infant baptism. Circumcision as the sign of the Covenant has changed its external form to reflect new spiritual realities. Because of Christ's shed blood, the bloody sign of circumcision has been transformed into the bloodless sign of the washing with water of baptism.

In his chapter "Baptism as a Sacrament of the Covenant," Reformed theologian Richard L. Pratt writes: "Reformed theologians and commentators

typically focus on baptism as an initiation into covenant by pointing out a similar analogy between baptism and circumcision. As the *Belgic Confession* states, ‘Having abolished circumcision, which was with blood, he established in its place the sacrament of baptism . . . Baptism does what the circumcision did for the Jewish people.’”

Infant Baptists believe that there is compelling evidence that circumcision has been replaced by baptism. To support their belief, they appeal especially to Colossians 2:11-12: “In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism.”

Many Infant Baptists interpret this text as teaching that baptism has replaced the function of circumcision. This means that for them infant baptism is less a statement of faith than an assumption of identity. It says that infant baptism is a sign of covenantal inclusion into the community of faith, just as circumcision was a sign of inclusion into the Abrahamic covenant.

The problem with this interpretation is the failure to recognize that the analogy between circumcision and baptism has both similarities and differences. In the New Testament those who are circumcised in God’s sight are not those who have been baptized at birth into the covenant community of faith, but those who have put off *the sinful nature*. This means that in the New Testament the concept of circumcision has been transformed from an *outward physical* sign into an *inward experience of spiritual circumcision* that is tied to baptism. The latter is *not an external physical sign* like circumcision performed on new born babies, but a *internal spiritual sign of new birth* in Christ experienced by all believers.

A Fundamental Error of Infant Baptists

A fundamental hermeneutical (interpretative) error of Infant Baptists is their emphasis on the *inner continuity* between the Old and New Covenants – an emphasis that causes them to ignore the *external discontinuity* between the two. They simultaneously “Christianize” the Old Testament by reading it as if it *were* the New, and “Judaize” the New Testament by reading it as if it *were* the Old.

Infant Baptists Christianize the Old Testament by restricting the significance of circumcision to purely spiritual blessings while ignoring its national and political function. They also Judaize the New Testament by applying the national function of the Old Testament circumcision to baptism. The latter concept is foreign to the New Testament teachings on baptism.

Circumcision and baptism are not the equivalent of each other. In the first place, no one is born into the New Covenant; whereas all circumcised infants in Israel were born into the Abrahamic covenant, no one is born into the New Covenant. In the second place, no one receives baptism as the sign of the New Covenant automatically, without repenting and accepting Christ by faith. Third, while the promises of the Old Covenant were of a temporal nature, linked to the land of Canaan, the promises of the New Covenant are eternal and linked to the new earth.

In the Old Covenant circumcision was the sign of national identity, given as a birthright to any new-born Jewish infant. In the New Covenant baptism is a sign of spiritual identity – received only by faith and repentance, not automatically by birthright. In the Old Covenant circumcision was mandatory for all male infants. In the New Covenant baptism is not mandatory for infants. It is mandatory only for those who believe and repent. Thus we see that circumcision had a different purpose than baptism. Circumcision was commanded by God for all male infants. By contrast, baptism is given only to those who believe and repent.

From a historical perspective it is worth noting that the belief that baptism replaces circumcision represents a late development when the church and state became a unified body, controlled by the Bishop of Rome. At that time, the doctrine of baptism replacing circumcision was developed to justify the theology of infant baptism. This process is discussed at length in the scholarly study *Baptism in the Early Church* (2005) by Professors Hendrick Stander and Johannes Louw, both recognized authorities in the field of Patristic studies. We shall refer shortly to this important study.

Infant Baptists use a number of New Testament passages to support their belief that in the New Covenant infant baptism replaces circumcision as the sign of covenantal inclusion. For the sake of brevity we will examine only a few of them.

Household Baptisms

In the Old Testament, if the head of a household converted to Judaism, all the males in the house, even the infants, were circumcised. Infant Baptists argue that the same pattern continues in the New Testament. Household baptism allegedly implies that the rules for membership in Abraham's covenant continue in the New Testament. The main difference is that the sign of circumcision is replaced by infant baptism.

To support this belief, Infant Baptists appeal to four major stories where the head of a household is baptized with all of its members: *Cornelius' household* (Acts 10:46-48), *Lydia's household* (Acts 16:15), the *Philippian jailer's household* (Acts 16:33), and *Stephanas' household* (1 Cor 1:16). Paedobaptists claim that "it is inconceivable that in all these households there were no little children and infants. When their parents and other responsible members of the household were baptized, the children were obviously included as well."

This popular assumption is discredited by a closer look at these household baptisms which reveals that its members were baptized because they "believed," not because the head of the household was converted.

Cornelius' Household (Acts 10:44-48)

Peter's explicit warrant for baptizing Cornelius and his household is that "these people . . . have received the Holy Spirit just as we have" (Acts 10:47), and NOT because the covenant head of the household had been converted. Luke explicitly mentions that while Peter was speaking "the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word" (Acts 10:44). The reception of the Holy Spirit by the members of the household implies that each member had been converted and for that reason they were baptized. The Holy Spirit is not given arbitrarily to unbelievers.

Lydia's Household (Acts 16:14-15)

Lydia is described as a "worshipper of God" who "opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14). Her baptism signified her acceptance of the message proclaimed by Paul. "She was baptized with

her household” (Acts 16:15). Nothing in the passage suggests that Lydia’s household included infants.

The fact that she was a business woman who traveled extensively to sell her “purple goods” suggests that she had no husband and therefore no children. In his scholarly study *Did the Early Church Baptize Children*, Kurt Allen reaches the same conclusion, saying: “Lydia could not have had children or infants when her household was baptized, since no husband is mentioned in her account of Acts 16.” To read infants into the text goes against the context. Thus, the baptism of Lydia’s household has no significance for infant baptism.

Philippian Jailer’s Household (Acts 16:25-34)

The entire household of the Jailer heard the message of the Gospel: “And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all that were in the house” (Acts 16:32). The implication is that all the members of the household heard the Gospel, believed, and were baptized. As stated by Paul Jewett, “Taken at its face value, the account of Acts sets before us a hearing, believing, rejoicing household that received baptism.” The passage offers no support for infant baptism. It would be exceedingly strange if only the jailer believed the Gospel and the infant members of his household were baptized without believing.

Stephanas’ Household (1 Corinthians 1:16)

Paul informs us that he did “baptize also the household of Stephanas” (1 Cor 1:16). He describes the members of Stephanas’ household as his “first converts in Achaia” who “devoted themselves to the service of the saints” (1 Cor 16:15). It is evident that a *household conversion* occurred, not merely a household baptism. The fact that all the members of Stephanas’ household were converted and devoted themselves to the service of the saints hardly supports the notion that some of them were baptized infants. Conversion and service presupposes mature believers. Infants are not old enough to devote themselves to the service of the saints.

Peter’s Pentecostal Speech (Acts 2:38-39)

In his Pentecostal sermon, Peter appealed to the Jews saying: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of

your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:38-39).

Most Infant Baptists interpret this text to mean that God has given a “special” promise to the children of Christian parents which insures that they are included in the covenant community. This privilege is not granted to children of non-Christian parents. This interpretation shows that Infant Baptists are so attuned to the Old Testament echo of this text (“you and your children”) that they ignore the expanded teaching of the New Testament (“and to *all* that are afar off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him”).

The three phrases of this passage must be taken together: (1) you, (2) your children, (3) all that are far off. The promise is equally applied to all three categories of people. There is nothing special about “your children” which cannot be said about the other two categories.

The immediate context suggests that the promise Peter is speaking about is the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit predicted by Joel. This special promise is not just for covenant children, but for *all who hear the Gospel* – “all that are far off.”

1 Corinthians 7:14: The Influence of the Believing Spouse

First Corinthians 7:14 mentions the sanctifying influence of a believing spouse upon unbelieving spouse and children: “For the unbelieving husband is consecrated through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is consecrated through her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy.”

Most Infant Baptists appeal to this passage to prove their case for infant baptism. They argue that this passage implies infant baptism in a most obvious way. But a closer examination reveals that this passage offers no support for infant baptism. In fact, it argues against it.

Infant Baptists interpret this passage to mean that the children of at least one believing parent are “covenantally holy,” that is, members of the covenant community of faith. They are not “externally unclean,” like the children of non-Christian parents. But this interpretation is clearly discredited by the

use of the root word for “holy–*hagia*,” which is applied to *both* the child and the unbelieving spouse. If they are both “covenantally holy,” why are they not *both* baptized and included in the covenant community?

Infant Baptists will baptize the child, but not the unbelieving spouse, because they maintain that the meaning of “holy” is applied to the child in a *different* way than to the spouse. This is irresponsible eisegesis, that is, reading a foreign meaning into the text, because the same root word is applied to both.

Stan Reeves concludes his detailed analysis of 1 Corinthians 7:14, noting that this passage “provides a strong argument against paedobaptism. Paul’s argument is founded on the similarity between the case of unbelieving spouses and the case of believers’ children. If the holiness of the unbelieving spouse falls short of qualifying him/her for baptism, then by Paul’s reasoning the holiness of believers’ children falls short of this too. If the church at Corinth admitted their children to baptism and church membership, but denied this to unbelieving spouses, then the two groups were in quite different circumstances. Thus, Paul’s argument would be completely invalid. Since Paul’s argument must be valid, we are forced to conclude that the church at Corinth did not admit their children to baptism or church membership.”

Inconsistencies in the Infant Baptists Practice

There are inconsistencies in the way Infant Baptists apply their teachings on baptism. On the one hand they base their theory of baptism upon the principle of the continuity between the Old and New Covenant, but on the other hand, they violate this very principle by allowing for discontinuity in their practice of infant baptism. This dilemma is to be expected because once biblical teachings are misinterpreted, inconsistencies are bound to arise in their application.

For example, Infant Baptists do not allow their little children to participate in the Lord’s Supper. This is a significant inconsistency because in the New Testament the replacement of the Passover Meal with the Lord’s Supper is more explicitly taught than the replacement of circumcision with baptism. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper within the context of a Passover meal with His disciples (Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-30).

Under the Old Covenant, *every* member of the household was expected to participate in the Passover meal. “According to what each can eat you

shall make your count for the lamb” (Ex 12:4). No profession of *faith* was required to participate in the Passover meal. Yet most Infant Baptists do not allow their little children to participate in the Lord’s Supper because they believe the ordinance is intended only for adults. This suggests that they are accommodating their interpretation of Scripture to their established practice, rather than *judging* their practice by what they consider to be the teaching of the Scripture.

Another inconsistency can be seen in the fact that Infant Baptists do not baptize *all* the family members at the same time. This is inconsistent with their interpretation of the household baptisms in Acts, which they believe included even the infants. In order to justify their failure to baptize spouses, adult children, little children, and every other member of the household, they appeal to cultural considerations and to the requirements of a confession of faith by each member of the family. But these considerations negate their interpretation of the household baptisms as inclusive of all the members, even infants.

Conclusion

Our analysis of the traditional arguments for infant baptism has shown that they are based on faulty interpretation of biblical texts – an interpretation which is largely influenced by the so-called Covenant Theology. We found that a major problem with the Covenant Theology, which is used to defend infant baptism, is that it overlooks significant discontinuities that exist between the meaning and function of circumcision and baptism. In the New Covenant we become members of the community of faith not through natural birth, but through spiritual rebirth, signified by baptism.

Our closer examination of the major biblical passages used to support infant baptism has shown that none of them mention or even suggest infant baptism. As stated by the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher, “All traces of infant baptism presumably found in the New Testament must first be put into it.”²¹ In their scholarly study cited earlier *Baptism in the Early Church*, Professors Hendrick Stander and Johannes Louw warn that “it is unsound to scrutinize the New Testament writings for allusions to infant baptism, since the latter involved a later historical development.”²² By this they mean that it is a futile effort to look for infant baptism in the New Testament since the practice started in the latter part of the third century. The significance of their scholarly study is considered in the next section.

PART 3
INFANT BAPTISM IN HISTORY

This important part of the chapter will be posted in the next newsletter, which traces the origin and theological development of infant baptism. We shall see how infant baptism has been used as a political instrument to perpetuate state churches filled with nominal Christians.

By way of conclusion we shall reflect on some of the significant problems that stem from the belief and practice of infant baptism. We shall see that infant baptism has contributed to the ritualization of Christianity and the secularization of the church, besides fostering a false security of salvation. You should find the next newsletter perhaps even more informative than the present one.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF SERVICES AND PRODUCTS**CRISTINA PICCARDI'S NEW DVD RECORDINGS**

A brand new recording of Cristina Piccardi's sacred concert and of our **SABBATH SEMINAR with WORDS AND SONGS** was made in Loma Linda few weeks ago. The recording was done with four state-of-the-art high definition cameras that provide an exceptional clear and crispy video images.

We felt the need to make a high quality recording to share our new ministry with fellow believers in different parts of the world. We are happy that at this time we can offer a professional recording both of Cristina's Sacred Concert and of our **SABBATH SEMINAR with WORDS AND SONGS**.

The **SACRED CONCERT** consists of **16 sacred familiar songs that cover the major themes of God's creative and redemptive love**. Her marvellous singing will touch your heart and inspire you to devote your life more fully to the Savior. You can see the picture of this new album by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/pic.htm>

The **SABBATH SEMINAR** consists of 3 DVD disks containing a total of 6 hours of recording, that is, the Cristina singing and my preaching done

on Friday evening, Sabbath morning, and Sabbath afternoon. Cristina sings a few songs before and after each of my lectures. You can enjoy this informative and inspiring 6 hours seminar in the privacy of your home or church, without having to travel long distances or investing money to fly us in. You can see the picture of this new album by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/sabbathandsong/index.htm>

Who is Cristina Piccardi?

In my view Cristina is by far the best Adventist soprano I have heard in my life. Surprisingly she is a slim, only 118 pounds, 5.6 feet high – not the typical heavy-set soprano. When my wife asked her: “How can you project such a powerful voice when you are so slim?” She replied: “It is God’s gift.”

Cristina was born in Brazil 26 years ago and came to Andrews University two years ago to accompany her husband who is studying at the seminary. She has earned degrees in voice performance both in Brazil and at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, PA, where she received full scholarship during the two years of her studies, graduating in December of 2005.

She has performed in a leading role with symphonic orchestras in the USA and overseas. In the year 2005 she won the first price at an International Competition for Opera Singers.

I officially met Cristina on October 6, 2007 at Andrews University Pioneer Memorial Church. I was spellbound by the three sacred songs she sung during the communion service led by Pastor Dwight Nelson. When we met after the communion service, we both immediately felt that the Lord was bringing us together in a providential way to proclaim with words and songs our timely Adventist Message. She told me that after singing for five years in a leading role with various symphonic orchestras, she felt the call of God to leave glitzy opera stage, in order to dedicate the gift of her voice to sing sacred music. This means that now we are presenting together with words and songs my powerpoint seminars on the **SABBATH, SECOND ADVENT, and CHRISTIAN LIFE STYLE**.

You can enjoy a preview of Cristina’s outstanding singing by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cristina/> She sings the first stanza of THE HOLY CITY.

Special Package Offer of Cristina's Recordings.

At this time we wish to offer the complete package of Cristina's three albums, together with the newly recorded SABBATH SEMINAR with WORDS AND SONGS for only \$50.00, instead of the regular price of \$230.00. The package included the following four albums:

1) THE CD ALBUM REJOICE IN THE LORD which consists of 11 sacred songs recorded with Marcelo Caceres, Professor of piano at Andrews University. The regular price of the album is \$30.00.

2) THE DVD ALBUM SING UNTO THE LORD which consists of 10 sacred songs recorded at the Andrews University Pioneer Memorial SDA Church. The regular price of the DVD album is \$50.00.

3) THE DVD ALBUM BY HIS GRACE which consists of 16 sacred songs recorded in Loma Linda with four high-definition cameras. The regular price of the DVD is \$50.00.

4) THE DVD ALBUM OF THE SABBATH WITH WORDS AND SONGS which consists of three DVD disks with 6 hours of recordings of Cristina singing and my preaching done on Friday evening, Sabbath morning, and Sabbath afternoon. The regular price is \$100.00.

The special offer on the above package of 4 albums is only \$50.00, mailing expenses included even overseas, instead of the regular price of \$230.00.

How to Order Cristina's Package of Four Albums

You can order the package of the four albums containing Cristina's Sacred Concerts and the SABBATH SEMINAR in WORDS AND SONGS in four different ways:

(1) ONLINE: By clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=26&products_id=122

(2) PHONE: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) EMAIL: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) REGULAR MAIL: By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

UPCOMING SEMINARS FOR THE MONTH OF APRIL

As a service to our subscribers, I am listing the seminars scheduled for the month of April 2008. We wish to extend a warm welcome to those of you who live close to the location of our seminars. Our new seminars with Words and Songs will touch your heart and expand your mind.

MARCH 28-29: SAN DIEGO FIL-AMERICAN SDA CHURCH

Location: 3602 Bonita Road, Chula Vista, California 91910

For directions and information call Pastor Demetrio Roblems at (619) 475-7934

APRIL 4-5: CHINO CA: PORTUGHESE SDA CHURCH

Location: 4730 Park Street, Chino, CA 91710

For directions and information call Pastor Paulo Bechara at (951) 509-0651

APRIL 11-12: SAN DIEGO: EL CAJON SDA CHURCH

Location: 1630 E. Madison Avenue, El Cajon, CA 92019

For directions and information call Pastor Gary Ford at (619) 466-2009

APRIL 18-19: LOMA LINDA FILIPINO SDA CHURCH

Location: 11180 New Jersey Street, Redlands, CA 92373

For directions and information call Pastor Jose Manalo, (909) 799-3733

HOW TO CONTACT THE CENTER FOR CANCER CARE IN GOSHEN, INDIANA THAT TREATED MY CANCER

Two days following my 69th birthday, I learned that I had advanced-stage colon cancer requiring immediate surgery. Later I was told that the cancer had spread to the liver, infesting 90% of the organ and making its prognosis

bleak. Several oncologists that I consulted, confirmed that I had Stage 4 terminal liver cancer, with only a few months to live. All what they could do was to prolong my life with chemotherapy for a few months or a year at best. No Cancer Center, including Loma Linda Cancer Center, had a clinical trial program for liver cancer. The impression I received is that nothing could be done to heal my cancer: I was doomed to die in a few months, at most a year.

Driven by my faith in God and optimistic attitude, I sought another opinion at the Center for Cancer Care in Goshen, Indiana, which is located only one hour away from Andrews University, where I live. Following a two-hour consultation with Dr. Seza Gulec (see the picture at my website by clicking <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/goshen>), a pioneer in the field of nuclear oncology, I learned that my cancer was terminal but treatable with a combined strategy of chemotherapy and microsphere embolization - a treatment unavailable at most cancer centers. Within one month, the innovative treatment reduced the presence of liver cancer by almost 80% and decreased total tumor volume from 2435cc to 680cc. Within two months, two more treatments reduced my cancer by 95%.

Today I feel like a new man with a new lease on life. I feel like an old car with a decent looking body and a brand new motor. I have more energy than I have had earlier in my life. I can only thank God for His providential leading to the right place and for using the latest research to restore my health.

Click here to see the pictures of the various stages of my cancer: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/goshen>

The Goshen Center for Cancer Care is one of the few treatment facilities in the world to offer this breakthrough technology primarily due to the commitment of Dr. Gulec. A world-renowned physician, Dr. Gulec has dedicated years to research and develop the combination therapy, which greatly increases survival rates in those with advanced types of cancer. He has also authored landmark publications in lymphatic mapping, sentinel node biopsy, radioguided surgery and radionuclide therapy. Dr. Gulec currently leads the endocrine surgery, hepatic oncology, molecular imaging and positron emission tomography programs at the Goshen Center for Cancer Care. To learn more about Dr. Seza Gulec click: <http://www.cancermidwest.com/main.asp?id=217>

Truly I can say that I believe that the Lord providentially placed me in contact with Dr. Gulec, who has done for me what appeared to be impossible. The Lord has used Dr. Gulec to give me a new lease on life. He is so proud of my recovery that he uses me as a show case at international nuclear oncological conferences. Now I feel like a new man energized to serve the Lord in a greater way in the sunset years of my life. Somehow I feel that I have more energy now than I had at 25 years of age.

You can contact the CENTER FOR CANCER CARE in Goshen, Indiana in the following ways:

1) PHONE: (888) 491-4673

2) EMAIL: sgulec@goshenhealth.com

3) WEBSITES: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/goshen> or <http://www.cancermidwest.com/>

PROF. JON PAULIEN'S VIDEO SEMINAR ON SIMPLY REVELATION

The 2008 Daily Devotional Book *The Gospel from Patmos*, is authored by Prof. Jon Paulien. He has done a masterful job in expanding each verse of the Revelation into a daily devotional thought.

To help you appreciate more fully Paulien's Daily Devotional, we offer you his DVD album on *Simply Revelation* that was released few months ago. We have been airmailing the DVD album to church leaders, pastors, and lay Adventists in different part of the world. Several pastors have already shown the lectures to their congregations. They wrote to me saying that viewing the lectures were truly an enlightening experience for their members.

My wife and I viewed *Simply Revelation* on our TV on a Sabbath afternoon. Though I had already watched Prof. Paulien's lectures during the taping session which I paid for, I was spellbound to hear him again offering so many refreshing insights into the most difficult book of the Bible. For me it is a thrilling experience listening to a scholar like Prof. Paulien, who knows what he is talking about.

Prof. Paulien is rightly regarded as a leading Adventist authority on the book of Revelation which he has taught at the Seminary for the past 25 years. His doctoral dissertation as well as several of his books deal specifically with the Book of Revelation.

The constant demand for Prof. Paulien's CD album with his publications and articles, led me to discuss with him the possibility of producing a live video recording of a mini Revelation Seminar, which he chose to call Simply Revelation. As suggested by its title, Simply Revelation aims to present simply the message of Revelation-not to read into Revelation sensational, but senseless views.

The preparation of this video recording took several months. The Simply Revelation seminar consists of four one-hour live video lectures, which have just been recorded in the studio of Andrews University. An impressive virtual studio provides the background of the lectures. Each lecture is delivered with about 50 powerpoint slides. This mini Revelation seminar will offer you and your congregation fresh insights into the Book of Revelation. Be sure to inform your pastor about the newly released Simply Revelation, if he is not aware of it.

The file with the powerpoint slides is placed on Prof. Paulien's CD album containing all his publications and articles. The reason is that there was no memory left on the DVD disks. In spite of my pleas, Prof. Paulien was so full of the subject that he used the full 60 minutes of each lecture, leaving no space for the slides' file.

This has been a very expensive project, both in time and money. I sponsored it financially because I believe that many will be blessed by Paulien's fresh insights into Revelation. **The regular price of the DVD album is \$100.00, but you can order it now at the SPECIAL PRICE for only \$50.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.**

If you have not ordered before the **CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications, we will be glad to add it to your DVD order for only \$20.00**, instead of the regular price of \$60.00. This means that you can order both the DVD album with Prof. Paulien's four live video lectures on Simply Revelation and his CD album with all his publications and the powerpoint slides of Simply Revelation, for only \$50.00, instead of the regular price of \$160.00.

As an additional incentive, I am offering you together with Prof. Paulien's DVD/CD albums, also my own popular **DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, for an additional \$10.00, instead of the regular price of \$100.00.** This means that you can order the DVD and CD albums by Prof. Paulien, together with my DVD album on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, for only \$70.00, instead of the regular price of \$260.00.

This research on *The Mark and Number of the Beast*, was commissioned by Prof. Paulien himself. He asked me to trace historically the origin and use of the Pope's title *Vicarius Filii Dei* and of the number 666. I spent five months conducting this investigation which was professionally taped at the Andrews University Towers Auditorium. I use 195 powerpoint slides to deliver this informative two hours lecture which has been warmly received by Adventist church leaders and pastors in many parts of the world. For a detailed description of this DVD album click: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/Beast/BeastPromo>

Special Offer on Prof. Paulien and Prof. Bacchiocchi's Albums:

*** ONE DVD Album of Prof. Paulien's four video lectures on *Simply Revelation* at the introductory price of \$50.00, instead of \$100.00.** The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

*** ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation* and ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications for only \$70.00,** instead of the regular price of \$160.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

*** ONE DVD Album of *Simply Revelation*, ONE CD Album with Prof. Paulien's publications, and ONE DVD Album with Bacchiocchi's two hours video lecture on *The Mark and Number of the Beast* for only \$80.00,** instead of the regular price of \$260.00. The price includes the airmailing expenses to any overseas destination.

Four Ways to Order Prof. Paulien and Prof. Bacchiocchi's Albums:

(1) ONLINE: By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/revelation/>

(2) PHONE: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) EMAIL: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date.

(4) REGULAR MAIL: By mailing a check to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 49103, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

SPECIAL OFFER ON 12 DVD/CD ALBUMS FOR ONLY \$150.00, INSTEAD OF THE REGULAR PRICE OF \$1150.00

This offer may sound too good to be true. At this time we are offering together as a package all the **12 DVD/CD albums we have recorded, for only \$150.00, instead of \$1150.00.** Until now these recordings were sold separately, costing considerably more. To make it possible for many to benefit from all these timely messages, I have decided to offer them together as a package **for only \$150.00, instead of the regular price of \$1150.00.**

The Package Includes the Following 12 Albums:

1) DVD Album with Sabbath Seminar with Words and Songs recorded at the Avon Park SDA Church on November 16-17, 2007. The album contains three DVD disks with 6 hours of recordings.

2) DVD and CD Album containing Cristina Piccardi's sacred songs. The CD Album "Rejoice in the Lord" contains 11 songs. The DVD Album "Sing Unto the Lord" contains 10 songs.

3) Prof. Jon Paulien's newly released DVD ALBUM video seminar on *Simply Revelation*.

4) Prof. Jon Paulien's CD ALBUM with a dozen of his books, and all his articles.

5) Prof. Graeme Bradford's DVD ALBUM with a two hours video lecture on Ellen White. He shares the highlights of his book *More than a Prophet*. The album contains also Prof. Bradford's the publications and articles.

6) Prof. Bacchiocchi's newly recorded DVD ALBUM called ABUNDANT LIFE SEMINAR. The album contains 2 video powerpoint lectures: The Christian and Alcoholic Beverages and How to Build a Happy and Lasting Marriage. These two lectures summarize the highlights of Bacchiocchi's two books Wine in the Bible and The Marriage Covenant. Two separate files with 225 powerpoint slides are included.

7) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM containing 10 video powerpoint lectures on the Sabbath and Second Advent. Some of the lectures show the documents Prof. Bacchiocchi found in Vatican libraries on the role of the papacy in changing the Sabbath to Sunday. This album contains the popular powerpoint SABBATH/ADVENT seminars Prof. Bacchiocchi presents in many countries.

8) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM on Cracking the Da Vinci Code. The album contains a two hours video lecture, professionally taped with a virtual studio as a background. A separate file with 200 powerpoint slides is included.

9) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM on The Mark and the Number of the Beast. The album contains the two hours video lecture and a separate powerpoint file with the 200 slides used for the lecture.

10) Prof. Bacchiocchi's CD ALBUM with all his books and powerpoint lectures. The album consists of two disks. The first disk has all his 18 books and over 200 articles. The second disk has the slides and script of 25 of Prof. Bacchiocchi's popular PowerPoint presentations.

11) Prof. Bacchiocchi's DVD ALBUM on The Passion of Christ. The album contains the 2 hours live interview conducted by 3ABN on Prof. Bacchiocchi's book The Passion of Christ in Scripture and History.

12) Prof. Bacchiocchi's MP3 AUDIO ALBUM which contains 2 disks with 22 AUDIO lectures on vital biblical beliefs and practices. Ideal for listening in your car while driving.

You can see the picture of all the 12 ALBUMS and read a detailed description of them, just by clicking at this link:<http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/albumoffer.htm>

How to Order the Package of the 12 Albums:

You can order the complete package of 12 DVD/CD Albums for only \$150.00, instead of the regular price of \$1150.00, in four different ways:

(1) ONLINE: By clicking here: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/albumoffer.htm>

(2) PHONE: By calling us at (269) 471-2915 to give us your credit card number and postal address.

(3) EMAIL: By emailing your order to <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>. Be sure to provide your postal address, credit card number, and expiration date. For security reasons, you can email your credit card number in two separate messages. In the first message you email me the first 8 digits and in the second message the last 8 digits, plus the expiration date. Be sure to include your postal address.

(4) REGULAR MAIL: By mailing a check for \$150.00 to BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES, 4990 Appian Way, Berrien Springs, Michigan 4990, USA. We guarantee to process your order immediately.

INCREDIBLE NEW OFFERS ON HITACHI PROJECTORS

HITACHI has released the new CP-X400 3000 lumens projector, which has an impressive high resolution, low fan noise, and a wealth of connectivity options. The most impressive feature of this projector is the incredible price of **only \$1395.00** to help especially our churches and schools in developing countries. The price includes a three years replacement warranty.

This is the special offer on the following two models:

CP-X400 HIGH RESOLUTION 3000 LUMENS - Only \$1395.00

This is the lowest price for an HITACHI 3000 lumens projector.

CP-X1250 HIGH RESOLUTION 4500 LUMENS Only \$3795.00

Previous SDA price for the 4500 lumens was \$4900.00

WARRANTY: The above prices include a 3 years 24/7 replacement warranty worth about \$285.00.

You can order the HITACHI projectors online by clicking at this link: <http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/index.php?cPath=24> If you have a problem ordering online, call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone and process it immediately.

THE SMALLEST & MOST POWERFUL REMOTE PRESENTER

If you are looking for an outstanding REMOTE for your PowerPoint presentations, you will be pleased to know HONEYWELL has come out with the smallest and most powerful remote in the market.

The size of the transmitter is smaller than a credit card. You can stick it inside the palm of your hand and nobody can see it. I tested the remote in an open environment, and the radio signal can go up to 400 feet of distance. IT IS INCREDIBLE! The transmitter has three buttons: forward, backward, and laser.

You can order online the new POWERPOINT PRESENTER simply by clicking here: http://www.biblicalperspectives.com/cart/catalog/product_info.php?cPath=27&products_id=67

If you have a problem ordering online, simply call us at (269) 471-2915. We will take your order by phone. You can also email us your order at <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com>, giving us your address, credit card number, and expiration date.

DOES YOUR CHURCH OR SCHOOL NEED A SCREEN?

If your church/school is looking for a screen, the **DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY**, the largest manufacturer of screens in the world, has agreed to offer their line of screens to our Adventist churches and schools at about 30% discount.

The procedure is very simple. Visit the DA-LITE SCREEN COMPANY website at <http://www.da-lite.com>. You will see hundreds of models of screens with their respective prices. Once you find the screen that best suits your church, give us the model number by phone (269) 471-2915 or email your request <sbacchiocchi@biblicalperspectives.com> We will forward your order immediately to DA-LITE that will ship the screen directly to your address. You will receive the screen at about 30% discount.

NEW VIDEO RECORDING ON THE SANCTUARY BY PROF. ROY GANE

Few days ago Roy Gane, Ph. D., Prof. of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages at Andrews University Theological Seminary, made a video recording of four of his popular lectures on the sanctuary. You can see a preview of the recording on line by clicking at this link: <http://www.preludefilms.com/preview.html>

The DVD is distributed through a personal website that Roy Gane has set up. I was unable to sponsor the recording and distribution of this informative and timely DVD, simply because I do not have the time to take on additional responsibilities. But I promised that I would do my best to promote this timely recording. The title of the DVD album is Altar Call: Sacrifice, Sanctuary, and Salvation.

Altar Call: Sacrifice, Sanctuary, and Salvation

Altar Call is about God's plan to rescue us, as revealed in the services of His sanctuary. These fascinating services demonstrate His character of love, which includes both justice and mercy. They give us hope by revealing that God wants to dwell with us. They teach us how to interact with Him in order to receive the benefits of Christ's sacrifice. They show us how to get in touch with Jesus where He is working for us right now during the final phase of His ministry in the heavenly sanctuary.

To many Christians, Christ's prolonged absence since He ascended to heaven is a mystery. But the Bible reveals that He is continuing to save us, and it invites us to get in touch with Him where He is now - in His sanctuary in heaven. By becoming acquainted with what He is doing in the control center of the universe, we can enjoy closer interaction with Him, more fully experience His transforming grace, and have confidence that we are at peace with God.

The DVD contains four 1 hour lectures by Roy E. Gane, Professor of Hebrew Bible and Ancient Near Eastern Languages and Director of the Ph.D./Th.D. and M.Th. programs at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University. Born in Sydney, Australia, he graduated from Pacific Union College in 1977 with a B.A. in theology and a B.Mus. in piano performance. He completed his M.A. (1983) and Ph.D. (1992) in Hebrew language and literature at the University of California and taught in the Religion Department of Pacific Union College from 1992-94 before moving to Andrews University.

How to Order Altar Call: Sacrifice, Sanctuary, and Salvation

Simply click: <http://preludefilms.com>

At a time when the sanctuary doctrine is being challenged within and without the Adventist Church, it is refreshing to see an outstanding Adventist scholar showing the biblical validity and relevance of this doctrine. I strongly encourage you to order this DVD album, simply by clicking at this link: <http://www.preludefilms.com/store.html>

In the next newsletter you will read Part 2 of Prof. Roy Gane article on “Legalism and Righteousness by Faith.” The two parts article just appeared in the January and March issue of MINISTRY, An International Journal for Clergy. Many of you have asked for the footnotes of the articles. You can find both the two-parts article and footnotes at this link: <http://www.ministrymagazine.org/>