

## **I. Introduction:**

Conversations about infant baptism often feel very similar to conversations about politics. In most political debates very little headway is ever made. After a debate the conservative news source declares the conservative politician the victor, and the liberal news source disagrees. Many of us have grown cynical towards political debates, and we often wonder, “What’s the point?” So also with the subject of baptism we must ask the same question, “What’s the point? Why enter into another debate about baptism that will only cause more conflict? Why re-open this can of worms?”

The reason we must continually re-open this debate is because the Bible is clear: God wants our obedience<sup>1</sup> and desires his church to be united.<sup>2</sup> If obedience and unity are to be found in the church, we cannot pretend like we do not disagree on this important issue.

In light of the seriousness of God’s call to obedience and unity, we must put the debate in these terms, “Are Christians sinning when they have their children baptized?” Some Christians say yes, and other Christians say no. The good news is that this debate is not as nuanced and multifaceted as political debates, one party is going to be wrong. And while there is room for humble disagreement on this issue in the church, we must acknowledge the seriousness of this debate.

Because our upbringing, experiences and individual values greatly influence the way we look at what the Bible has to say about baptism, I do not expect this essay to instantly convince the reader that children of believers must be baptized. This debate will take time. My goal is simply to help the reader understand why many Christians baptize their babies. You may disagree with these Christians, but it is my hope that you will be able to accurately understand their position.

### **i. What we all agree upon**

It would be foolish to ignore the elements of baptism that all parties agree upon. All Christian churches practice baptism. All Christians agree that baptism was important to the New Testament writers. All Christians agree that baptism includes water. All Christians agree that baptism requires an administrator and a recipient (i.e. no one can baptize herself). All Christians believe that baptism is to be administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, all Christians believe that non-Christians, when they convert to Christianity, are to be baptized. Please don't miss this. **All Christians believe that when a non-Christian converts to Christianity, they are to be baptized.** No Christian denomination believes that every infant in the world is to be baptized. We all agree on this point. So why is baptism a debated topic?

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<sup>1</sup> For one clear example of this, read and reflect on 1 Samuel 15:22-23.

<sup>2</sup> For one example of this, reflect on Jesus’ prayer in John 17, particularly verse 21.

## **ii. Complications**

The disagreement comes because the New Testament nowhere explicitly tells believers to baptize their children. However, the New Testament also never explicitly tells believers to withhold baptism from their children until they make a profession of faith. The New Testament never explicitly tells us what to do with children of believers. This is why there is so much debate on this topic.

So, should Christians baptize their infants? To find an answer to this question, we need to first ask, “What does God think about infants, especially those born in the homes of his people?”

## **II. The God Who Saves Houses**

### **i. Adam and Eve and Their House**

The Bible begins with God creating the first two humans, Adam and Eve, and instructing them, among other things, to have many children.<sup>3</sup> God plants a special garden on the earth for these first humans to inhabit.<sup>4</sup> God walks among these first humans in this garden.<sup>5</sup> Adam and Eve were put into the garden with one specific command, “Do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.”<sup>6</sup> So long as Adam and Eve did not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they could continue to live under God’s protective care in this garden.

Adam and Eve failed. Before they had their first child, they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Because of their disobedience God drove them out of the garden.

Immediately following their removal from the garden, Adam and Eve conceive. Yet their children were not allowed back into the garden to experience God’s loving protection. Their children were forced to live in the world outside of the garden. If Adam and Eve would have been obedient, their children would have been born inside the garden with access to God’s protective care, but they were disobedient, and therefore their children were forced to live outside of the garden. It was not only Adam and Eve who reaped the consequences of their sins, but also their children were cut off from living in God’s close presence.

### **ii. Noah and His House**

The world outside of the garden was violent. Adam and Eve’s oldest son kills their second son.<sup>7</sup> Evil and wickedness only multiply after that. God decides he is going to send a great flood to “blot out” the humans on the earth.<sup>8</sup> But one man found favour in God’s eyes. His name was Noah. God enters into a special relationship with Noah and warns him of the flood that was soon to come. Noah builds an ark, and we are

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<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:28

<sup>4</sup> Genesis 2:8

<sup>5</sup> Genesis 3:8

<sup>6</sup> Genesis 2:16-17

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 4:8

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 6:7

told that because Noah found favour in God's eyes, not only was he saved from the flood, but his entire household was saved as well.<sup>9</sup>

### **iii. Abraham and His House**

Though they were delivered from this flood, some in Noah's house did not remain faithful to God. Eventually, rebellion and wickedness spread throughout the earth. Though God could have turned his back on his creation, he didn't. He entered into a formal relationship, called a covenant, with another house. God covenanted with a man named Abraham and promised to be his God. This promise was not just for Abraham but also for his entire house.<sup>10</sup>

God commanded Abraham to practice circumcision as a sign of this special relationship.<sup>11</sup> The physical removing of the male foreskin was a sign of God's promise to bless a specific people. All males in Abraham's house (i.e. all males under his authority) were to be circumcised and to fail to be circumcised was to break the covenant.<sup>12</sup> While women were not circumcised, they too were included in the covenant by virtue of their father's circumcision, and when they left their father's house, they were then part of the covenant by virtue of their husband's circumcision.

Genesis 17:27 tells us that all of the men in Abraham's house were circumcised with him after he received these instructions from God. God's blessings were not just for Abraham, but they were for his whole household, and circumcision was a sign or a reminder of those promises. To be part of the nation of Israel was to be circumcised. To convert to Judaism required the convert and all the males in his entire household to be circumcised.

### **iv. Houses and Circumcision**

To understand why some Christians baptize babies, one must first understand what circumcision meant to the people of Israel.

#### **a. Sign of Salvation by Faith**

In Genesis 15:6, we learn that Abraham, in response to hearing God's promises, "Believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness." This was before he was circumcised. This is why Paul, in Romans 4:11, teaches us that circumcision was a "seal of the righteousness that [Abraham] had by faith while he was still uncircumcised..." What Paul is saying is that circumcision was something that came *after* Abraham believed God's promises. Abraham was circumcised after he trusted in God's promise to bless him, and his circumcision served as a "seal" of that righteousness that God counted to Abraham when he believed.

#### **b. Application**

We know from Genesis 17 that every male in Abraham's house was to be circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. If circumcision was a "sign of the righteousness Abraham had by faith,"

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<sup>9</sup> Genesis 7:1

<sup>10</sup> Genesis 17:7

<sup>11</sup> Genesis 17:11

<sup>12</sup> Genesis 17:14

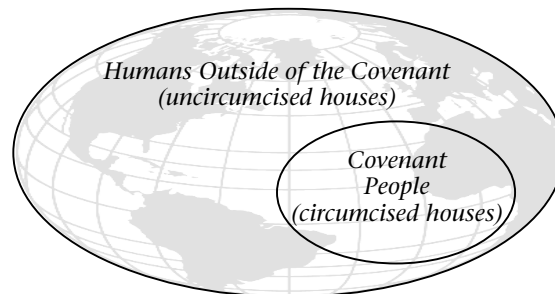
why was this physical action to be given to children 8 days old? Are we to assume that the male child had 7 days to contemplate the promises God had given to Abraham and then make a decision to believe them before being circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day? No, God commanded circumcision to be preformed on males who may choose to reject the promises of God. The sign is to be given to them none the less. The sign did not make the individual righteous; the individual still had to believe the promises like their father Abraham did.<sup>13</sup> However, the sign was applied to every male in Abraham's house.

### c. Circumcision and the House

This is because God is always concerned with houses. Adam's house was kicked out of Eden. Noah's house was rescued from a flood. Elsewhere God punishes entire households when the head of the house is disobedient.<sup>14</sup> God treats everyone in Abraham's house the way he treats Abraham. When Abraham's children had children, they were to leave their father and mother's house and start their own house. In this new house, they too were to have their males circumcised on the 8<sup>th</sup> day. To fail to do so would be to break the covenant (i.e. to tell God, "I don't care about your promises").<sup>15</sup>

### d. Boundary Markers

Circumcision marked out those who are in covenant with God. If you were circumcised or under the authority of someone who was circumcised, you were considered in the visible covenant. To be God's people meant to be a circumcised people, infants included.



**Yet, being circumcised in no way gave an individual a free pass to eternal life.** Throughout the Bible, God calls his people to trust his promises and to "circumcise their hearts."<sup>16</sup> Abraham's children, though they received the same circumcision as Abraham, still had to believe God's promises. Being physically circumcised was not to be treated as a free ticket to heaven.

What this means is that some of Abraham's children would reject the promises put on them through their circumcision (i.e. they will not circumcise their heart). Yet, God still tells Abraham to circumcise his children. Abraham's children were treated as part of the covenant community, until they rejected God's promises.

<sup>13</sup> The Bible later calls this "circumcising the heart." See Deuteronomy 10:16 and Jeremiah 9:25.

<sup>14</sup> In Genesis 12:10-20, Abraham and Sarah travel to Egypt. While in Egypt, Pharaoh takes Abraham's wife into his house. God punishes Pharaoh's entire house for his actions, not just Pharaoh (see v. 17).

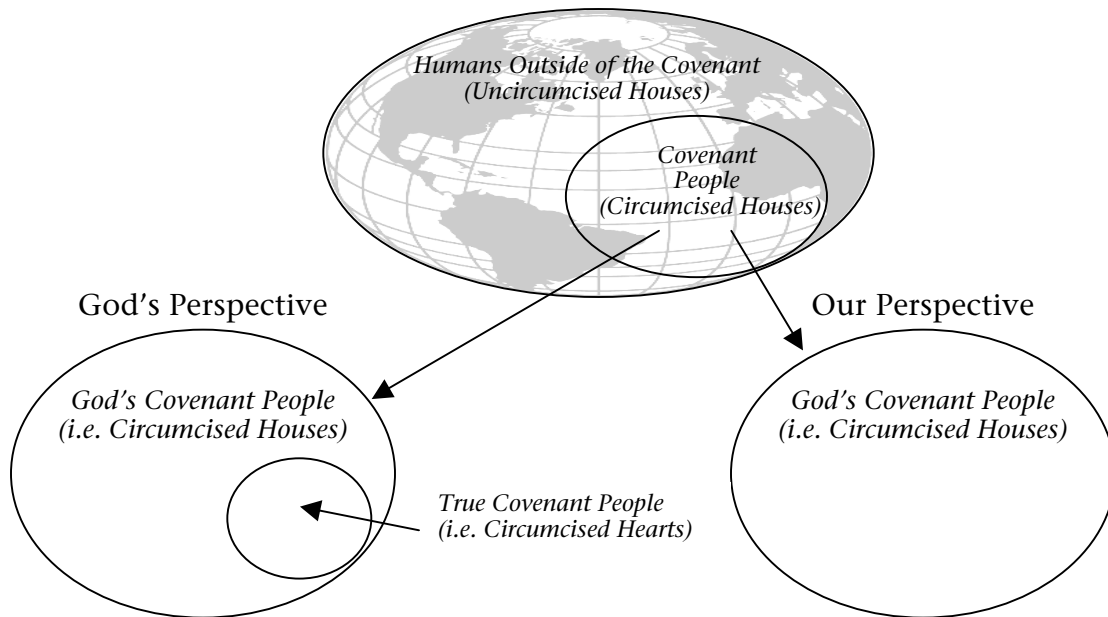
<sup>15</sup> Genesis 17:14

<sup>16</sup> Deut. 10:16, Deut. 30:6, Jer. 4:4

So when God looks on the earth, he sees people outside of the covenant and people who are in covenant with him. However, when God looks at his covenant people, he sees more than just circumcised people, he also is able to see those who have not circumcised their heart.

While God has this view, the Israelites were never privileged with this view. They never knew infallibly who had or had not circumcised his or her heart. Only God has this knowledge, and he will separate the true followers from the false followers on the last day.

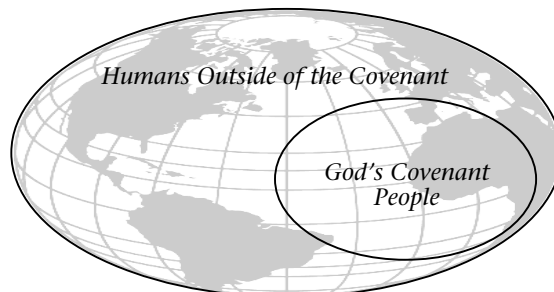
Circumcision served as a boundary marker. Who are God's people? Those who are circumcised. Who does God bless? God blesses his people. Will all the circumcised inherit eternal life? No, some will be unfaithful in the end, but humanity will never infallibly know who will be unfaithful in the end.



## v. Baptism

With this understanding of God's view of houses and also the meaning of circumcision, discussions about why some Christians baptize their children will be much easier.

Every time a child is born in a Christian home, we must ask ourselves, which circle does this child belong in?



In the New Testament, baptism functionally replaces circumcision.

When someone believes the good news of Jesus Christ, the New Testament is clear; they are not forced to be circumcised, but rather baptized. In Acts 15 we read that some individuals in the early church taught that converts must be circumcised, but the apostles and elders of the church rejected this idea unanimously. In 1 Corinthians 7:18 Paul goes as far as to say that circumcision now counts for nothing.

### **a. Sign of Salvation by Faith**

But circumcision did count for something. It was a sign of the righteousness Abraham received by faith and the promise of salvation to all who believe.<sup>17</sup> Paul could only say that circumcision counted for nothing if there was a new sign that represented the same spiritual reality that circumcision represented.

### **b. Baptism and Circumcision**

In Colossians 2:11-14, Paul shows us that baptism is a greater circumcision. He says the church at Colossae was “circumcised with a circumcision not preformed by human hands” but with a circumcision that removed more than the foreskin, one that “removed the entire fleshly body.” Paul goes on to say that the church was “buried with [Christ] in baptism,” and also “raised with him through [their] faith in the power of God who raised him from the dead.” Baptism is now the sign of the new life that comes through faith in the power of God.

Furthermore, baptism, like circumcision, puts us into the circle of the visible covenant community. This community is known as “Christ’s Body”.<sup>18</sup> This is why we are said to be baptized into Christ.<sup>19</sup> Paul makes this clear in 1 Corinthians 12:13 when he teaches that baptism puts us into one body. We become the people marked out as belonging to “the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” in whose name we are baptized.<sup>20</sup>

### **c. Applied to Households**

Seeing the connection between baptism and circumcision is important. It is also important to remember the high view the Bible has regarding households. Since circumcision was preformed on entire households, it should not surprise us that ***every person named in the baptism stories of the New Testament that was likely to have a household had their household baptized.***

Of the nine individuals who were said to be baptized in the New Testament, three, more than likely, lacked children (the magician, the eunuch and Saul). Five had their households baptized. This leaves only one individual in the Bible who may not have had his household baptized. This individual is Gaius. In 1 Corinthians 1:14, Paul says that he baptized no one except Crispus and Gaius. We can read about Crispus’ household being baptized with him in Acts 18:8. Since Paul mentions baptizing

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<sup>17</sup> This is what Paul clearly says in Romans 4:11.

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:27

<sup>19</sup> Romans 6:1-4

<sup>20</sup> Matthew 28:19

Crispus without mentioning his family, more than likely, Paul saw Crispus as representing his household in the same way a father would represent his household in circumcision. If Gaius had a household, it is quite reasonable to assume his household was baptized as well.<sup>21</sup>

Though some might say that this is an argument from silence, as we do not know if there were any infants in these households, this response misses the point. We must let the Bible define what a household is. The Old Testament is clear; infants are part of households. They were circumcised. They were rescued from Egypt. They were rescued from invading armies. The Bible consistently views a house not as, “those who are old enough to intellectually assent to being in a house,” but as “those who are under the authority of the head of the house.” Infants are members of a household according to the Bible. Therefore baptism, like circumcision, is rightly administered to households.

#### **d. Boundary Markers**

Circumcision marked out those who were in the “nation of Israel.” In Exodus 19:5-6, the whole nation was called a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” This description most certainly included all those infants who were part of the nation of Israel. It would be strange to believe this description did not include children.<sup>22</sup> So also, the church is now called “a chosen race, a royal priesthood, [and] a holy nation...”<sup>23</sup> It would follow that the infants of the church must be included in this description as well.

What this means is that baptism puts one into visible covenant community. Being in the visible covenant community does not guarantee one will end up in heaven; however, it does mean one will be treated as part of God’s family, the church.

In the same way that God knew some who were physically circumcised had never circumcised their heart, so also, God today knows that some who have been physically baptized have not baptized their heart. Though the church is to do its best to remain pure,<sup>24</sup> we also know that in the last day, God will separate the true followers of Christ from those who are false.<sup>25</sup>

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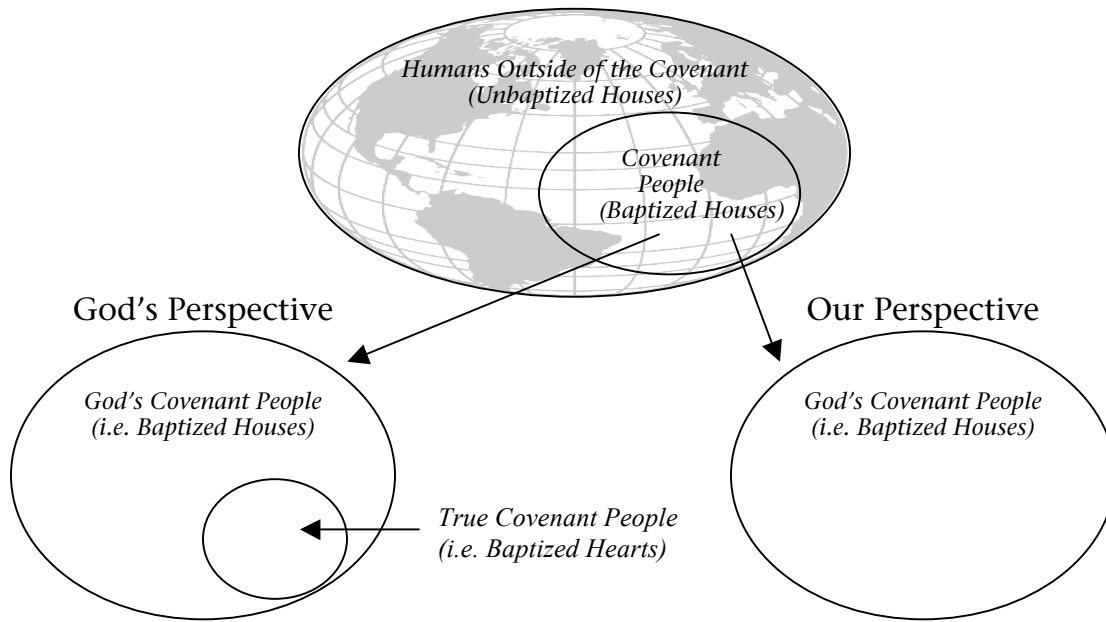
<b>Baptized Individual</b>	<b>Passage</b>	<b>Household?</b>
<i>Simon the Magician</i>	<i>Acts 8:13</i>	<i>No. But magicians typically did not have families.</i>
<i>Ethiopian Eunuch</i>	<i>Acts 8:38</i>	<i>No. But eunuchs cannot have kids.</i>
<i>Saul (Paul)</i>	<i>Acts 9:18</i>	<i>No. But he was not married. See 1 Cor. 7:6-7</i>
<i>Cornelius</i>	<i>Acts 11:14</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Lydia</i>	<i>Acts 16:15</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Philippian Jailor</i>	<i>Acts 16:33</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Crispus</i>	<i>Acts 18:8 &amp; 1 Cor. 1:14</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Stephanas</i>	<i>1 Cor. 1:16</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Gaius</i>	<i>1 Cor. 1:14</i>	<i>Possible</i>

<sup>22</sup> The Psalmist clearly sees the praise of children as one of the ways God establishes his strength against his enemies in Psalm 8:2.

<sup>23</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

<sup>24</sup> The church is to maintain purity by practicing church discipline (Matthew 18:17), by challenging every member to “examine themselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5), and by challenging the members to examine themselves as they come to the Lord’s table (1 Corinthians 11:28).

<sup>25</sup> See Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 13:24-30.



### e. Instructions in the Epistles

The Bible treats infants as members of the church, the body of Christ on earth. This is why Paul can write a letter addressed to “the saints who are in Ephesus” and say to some of those saints “Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right. Honour your father and mother, which is the first command accompanied by a promise, namely that it may go well with you and that you will live a long time on the earth.”<sup>26</sup> If Paul includes these children in the church, so also should we.

#### i. Conclusion

In conclusion, the New Testament nowhere explicitly commands Christians to have their children baptized. However, the New Testament also nowhere tells Christians not to have their children baptized. What are we to do?

I believe the Scriptures are clear. God enters into relationships with entire households, and it is the responsibility of each member of the household to continue to be faithful in that relationship. In the same way circumcision put a male into the Jewish community, so also baptism puts everyone baptized into the visible body of Christ. Though the New Testament is silent on what Christians should do with their children, the Old Testament principles of household circumcisions ought to be obeyed unless they are repealed. It is the duty of Christian parents, not only to have their child baptized, but also to raise him or her up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.<sup>27</sup>

All Christians, even those who most vehemently reject infant baptism, treat children of believers different than they treat unbelievers. All Christians hold their children accountable to pray, read the Bible, obey God’s commandments, attend church, and even sing worship songs at church. In my opinion, this is a dangerous practice if you do not believe that God has been gracious to your children by placing them in a covenant house. Being a part of God’s family, praying, reading your Bible, obeying

<sup>26</sup> Ephesians 6:1-3

<sup>27</sup> Ephesians 6:4



God's commands, attending a church, and singing at church are all responses to God's grace. It is God who graciously receives us in his family when we did not deserve it. We intuitively know our children are members of the church (i.e. the visible covenant community); it makes no sense for us to continue to withhold baptism from them. For it was Jesus who said, "Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for such belongs the kingdom of God."<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Mark 10:14 and Luke 18:16

## **Appendix A: Common Objections**

### **i. “But there is there no explicit command!”**

True. But there is also no explicit command not to baptize your children. Since the Jewish people were putting the “sign and seal of the righteousness that comes through faith” on their infants for almost 2000 years before Christ, we would expect the writers of the New Testament (who were all Jewish) to make clear that children are no longer to be included in the people of God. We should not expect the New Testament to tell us to baptize our children, but we should expect the writers of the New Testament to tell us to stop symbolically placing our children in the covenant community. The writers nowhere tell us not to put the sign of membership on our children.

### **ii. “But isn’t baptism tied to faith?”**

Yes! Baptism is tied to faith, but so also was circumcision. Remember, Abraham “believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness” (Genesis 15:6) and then received the sign of circumcision as a “as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith...” (Romans 4:11). When someone converts, and puts their faith in Jesus Christ, they are to be baptized. There is no reason to believe that the entire household should not be included in receiving this sign, like circumcision. Though the children will have to believe the promises later in life, the sign of “righteousness that comes through faith” ought to be put upon them.

### **iii. “But doesn’t infant baptism create a weak commitment to Christianity in the Children?”**

This is true. Many churches today baptize babies and never follow up with the parents or the child. This is a tragedy. Baptism is to mark your beginning in the discipleship journey. The parents need to be held accountable to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). The children should not believe that baptism is a free ticket to eternal life; they should be warned of the dangers that come when we act faithless.

The way to fix the weak commitment to Christianity in children is not to withhold baptism from them and treat them like they are not part of the church. If we want our children to have a strong commitment to Christ, we need to be obedient to Paul’s teachings and bring our children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4). We also need to warn our children of the dangers that await those who turn their backs on God’s promises (for one example see Hebrews 5-6).

### **iv. “But why not just wait?”**

If we want to get along, why don’t we just wait a little bit and have our child baptized based on a very young “profession of faith”? There are two responses that I think must be made to this: First, God blesses obedience. If God tells us to do something, we should do it and trust that it is for our good to be obedient to his instructions. Second, baptism is a great source of blessing for our children. While baptism does not give them a free ticket into eternal life, God does promise to work through baptism. In baptism, God is ceremonially beginning a relationship with our child. Why would we want that formal introduction to be put off?

#### **v. “But Why Sprinkled?”**

It is important to note that not all churches that believe in household baptisms baptize by sprinkling. In some traditions the minister blows a large breath of air on the infant and then immediately dunks him or her! However, many churches that practice infant baptism do sprinkle or pour water on the head of the child. While mode of baptism is not essential, it is often very foreign for someone who grew up in an adult only baptism tradition to see someone sprinkled.

In Exodus 24:6-8 Moses sprinkles the blood of the covenant on the people of Israel, initiating the covenant relationships and purifying the people before God. Sprinkling of blood and or water was common in the temple (Numbers 19:20). The prophets teach that the Messiah will come, and he will sprinkle water on many nations (Isaiah 52:15). The prophet Ezekiel prophesies of a day when God himself will sprinkle clean water over his people and they will be clean (Ezekiel 35:24ff).

To say that baptisms in the New Testament always involved immersion is a bit of a stretch. Philip baptizes the Ethiopian eunuch in a desert (Acts 8:36), had there been a river nearby, this would not have been called a desert. In Act 9:18 Paul baptizes an individual immediately in a house. Cornelius was baptized indoors (Acts 10:48) as well. The Philippian Jailer was baptized indoors at night (Acts 16:33). Remember, this was during a time when one could not turn on a faucet and fill a tub immediately.

Furthermore, when God baptized individuals with fire, the fire rests upon individual's heads (Acts 2:3). When God baptized with the Holy Spirit, the Spirit fell upon (Acts 10:44, 11:15-16) or descended upon (Luke 3:22; John 1:32) or was poured out upon (Acts 2:17; 10:45-46), or came upon (Acts 19:6). These baptisms seem to come from above, and do not necessarily involve being immersed under something.

The mode of baptism is not essential, however, there are good reasons to believe the early baptism were done by sprinkling or pouring.

## Appendix B: Historical Arguments

I've done my best to refrain from using historical arguments to defend my position. I do think it is important to note that the Roman Catholics, the Eastern Orthodox, the Anglicans, the Lutherans, the Reformed, the Presbyterians, and many other traditions perform infant baptism. However, I think that we must be convinced of our position first and foremost from the Scriptures.

Nearly all historians agree, by the time of Chrysostom (died A.D. 407) and Augustine (died A.D. 430), churches were regularly baptizing member's infants. While some have argued that the church's practice by A.D. 400 was a deviation from the apostle's original teaching about baptism, the historical evidence is not so clear. One of the problems with the historical evidence is that all churches believed converts were to be baptized. Often the historical evidence is silent on the issue of baptizing babies. However, a close look at the evidence will show, it is likely that the early church practiced household baptism.

### i. Polycarp

Polycarp was an early church leader in Smyrna. He was a disciple of the apostle John, and he was martyred somewhere between A.D. 155 and 156.<sup>29</sup> As Polycarp was being brought into a stadium to be burned at the stake, the proconsul overseeing the burning sought to persuade him to deny Christ and avoid death. Polycarp refused saying, "Eighty and six years have I served him, and he hath done me no wrong; how can I blaspheme my king who saved me?"<sup>30</sup> Most people believe Polycarp to be eighty-six years old at his death.<sup>31</sup> If Polycarp had been a follower of Christ for eighty-six years, this would mean he was following Christ around A.D. 69, when the apostle John was still alive. Since in Polycarp's day, one dated his discipleship with his baptism, this would strongly suggest that Polycarp was baptized as an infant during the age of the Apostles.

### ii. Justin Martyr

Justin Martyr (A.D. 103-165) was an early defender of the Christian faith. In his *First Apology*, written around A.D. 150-155, he writes, "many, both men and women, who have been Christ's disciples from childhood, remain pure at the age of sixty and seventy years."<sup>32</sup> The phrase translated "who have been Christ's disciples from childhood," is best translated, "who were *made disciples* to Christ from [when they were] children." Justin uses the passive form of the verb in Matthew 28:19 "make disciples ... baptizing them." This would imply that baptism is what "makes them disciples," and it was preformed on them while they were yet young children.

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<sup>29</sup> For more regarding Polycarp see Ivor J. Davidson, *The Birth of the Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic Press, 2004), p. 203.

<sup>30</sup> This entire account can be found in the *Martyrium Polycarpi*, which can be found in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Bettenson and Chris Maunder, (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Davidson, p. 203.

<sup>32</sup> Justin Martyr, *Apology*, I:15 in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I, ed. By Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1950), p.167. This work is also fully available on Google Books.

### iii. Hippolytus

Many believe that Hippolytus wrote *The Apostolic Tradition* in Rome around A.D. 215, however, there is some debate about the document as we have it today. Many scholars believed that it is composed of different sources from the second to fourth century.<sup>33</sup> Chapters sixteen through twenty-three describe the ceremony of baptism. While much that is written is describe the baptism of a new converts, we do read in chapter 21, "Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them."<sup>34</sup> Many believe that this quote is found in the earliest core of the document.<sup>35</sup>

### iv. Origen

Origen of Alexandria lived between A.D. 185-254. In his *Homilies on Leviticus*, given around 284, he writes,

Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. . . . In the Church, baptism is given for the remission of sins, and, according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required the remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous.<sup>36</sup>

### v. Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian of Carthage lived from A.D. 200-258. Cyprian wrote almost entirely on practical matters. In his letters to Fidus, written in the early 250s, Cyprian wrote,

But in respect of the case of the infants, which you say ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, and that the law of ancient circumcision should be regarded, so that you think that one who is just born should not be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day, we all thought very differently in our council. For in this course which you thought was to be taken, no one agreed; but we all rather judge that the mercy and grace of God is not to be refused to any one born of man.<sup>37</sup>

### vi. Conclusion

While these five examples far from make a conclusive case, these examples do show that it is reasonable to believe that the church, from the days of the apostles, baptized infants of members. The burden of proof must be put heavily on the side of those who believe the church deviated from the apostle's teaching 400 years after Christ's resurrection and great commission.

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<sup>33</sup> See Paul F. Bradshaw, Maxwell E. Johnson and L. Edward Phillips, *The Apostolic Tradition: A Commentary*, ed. H. W. Attridge, Hermeneia, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), pp. 1-6, 13-15.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 112-13. Found in *Baptism: Three Views*, ed. David F. Wright, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), p. 146.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 124. Found in *Baptism: Three Views*, p. 146.

<sup>36</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Leviticus*, Homily 8:3. This work in its entirety can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/Origen8-3>

<sup>37</sup> *Letters to Fidus*, 58:2, this document can be found at <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/050658.htm>