

Scriptural idea somewhat better, but I am glad to accord full freedom to others to think as they may desire regarding this point.

Your suggestions about the practice of the early church are interesting. Unfortunately, it is extremely difficult to prove the facts regarding the matter since the evidence is so scanty. It seems to me that the statements in Acts are very difficult to interpret on the basis of immersion.

Your first question about the Septuagint is not difficult to answer. The verse is closely paralleled by the statement in I Peter 1 where Peter calls believers from many nations those who have been chosen for "sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ." Surely this is a reference to the last verse of Isaiah 52, which properly belongs with Isaiah 53, and must have been read by the Ethiopian eunuch. Chapter divisions were not introduced into the Scripture until the 13th century A.D.

It would seem to me that the Septuagint translators could not figure out what it would mean for the Servant of the Lord to "sprinkle many nations," and therefore made an unwarranted guess. Actually the Hebrew word that is used here is identical in form with the word that is used about a score of times in Leviticus and elsewhere to indicate the sprinkling of objects in the tabernacle, or of the garments of the priest, whether with blood, with water, or with oil. It is translated "sprinkle" about twenty times and never is translated "startle" in any other place in the Bible. The rendering "startle" has no philological justification.

Those scholars who claim that the word cannot mean "sprinkle" here base their argument on the fact that "sprinkle" usually has a direct object to indicate the blood, water, or oil that is sprinkled, instead of a direct object to indicate the thing on which the material is sprinkled. If the word occurred two hundred times and this was true in all of them, it would be a strong argument.

If the English word "sprinkle" only occurred twenty times and always was followed by a direct object to indicate the material that was sprinkled, it would not prove at all that the very next usage might not be to "sprinkle the lawn" which would be an exact parallel to the usage in Isaiah 52. Such an argument when based on a comparatively few cases impresses me as being more of an excuse than a reason.