

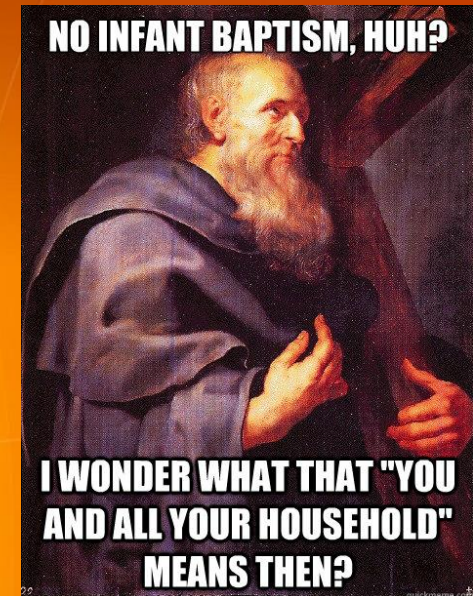
Roman Catholicism History of Infant Baptism

Oikos Apologetic Series

By Owen Daniels

Bible on Baptism

- Matthew 19:13-15 – “Then children were brought to him that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples rebuked the people, 14 but Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." 15 And he laid his hands on them and went away.
- Acts 16:31-33 – “And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." 32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their wounds; and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.”
- Acts 18:8 – “Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”
- 1 Corinthians 1:14-16 – “I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.)”

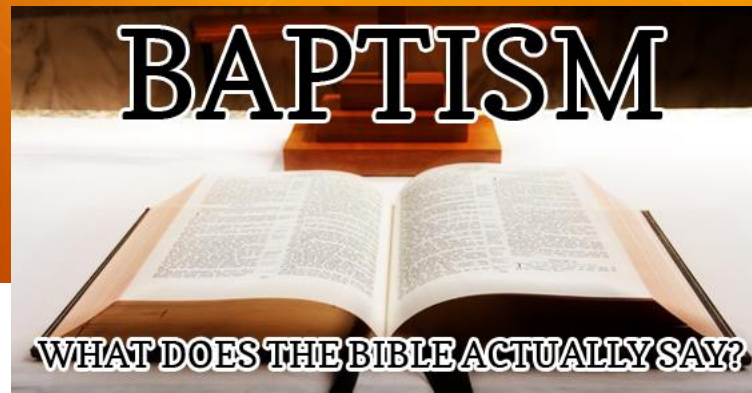


Bible on Baptism

- Acts 2:38-39 – “And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself.”

What conclusions can you draw?

- Christian baptism is a picture of the union of a believer in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. That is clear from Romans 6, Galatians 2, Galatians 3, Colossians 2.
- No infants explicitly mentioned.

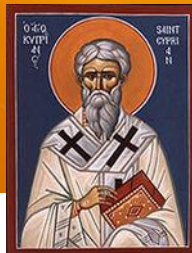
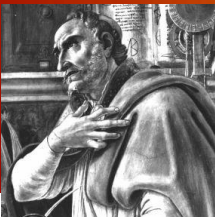


Cyprian, Augustine and Origen on Baptism

- Cyprian - “This recently born infant has not sinned except that, being born physically according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion [infection] of the ancient death at his birth. Thus, he more easily approaches the reception of the forgiveness of sins, because the sins forgiven are not his own but those of another.”
- Augustine - Cited the practice of infant baptism as further evidence of original sin. He called Cyprian's work the “book on the baptism of infants”. “What we are discussing concerns the obliteration of original sin in infants.” Although they had not yet personally sinned, infants would still be condemned because of their association with the sin of Adam. Thus, they were to be baptized soon after they were born.
- Origen averred: “The church has received a tradition from the apostles to give baptism even to little children.”

By the fifth century, infant baptism was the official church rite.

Allison, Gregg (2011-04-19). Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine (p. 619). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.



Tertullian on Baptism

- Tertullian's Denunciation of Infant Baptism

According to the circumstances, disposition, and even age of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally, however, in the case of little children. For why is it necessary ... that the sponsors should be thrust into danger? They themselves, by reason of death, may fail to fulfill their promises and may be disappointed by the development of an evil disposition in those children for whom they stood.

Certainly, the Lord does say about children, "Do not forbid them to come to me". Let them "come," then, while they are growing up. Let them "come" while they are learning, while they are learning where to come. Let them become Christians when they become able to know Christ.



Luther on Baptism

- Practiced infant baptism and viewed it as regenerating infants.
- Expanding on this definition of baptism, Luther explained that it is not the water that works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe, “but the Word of God which is with and in the water, and faith which trusts in the Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God, the water is nothing but water and no baptism. But with the Word of God, it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit.”
- Luther linked regeneration with saving faith; indeed, he emphasized that apart from faith in Christ through his Word, regeneration does not take place. He defined faith as “a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God, John 1 [: 12– 13]. It kills the old Adam and makes us altogether different men, in heart and spirit and mind and powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith.”
- “We bring the child to be baptized with the conviction and the hope that he will believe, and we pray that God will give him faith. But we do not baptize on the strength of this belief, but only on the fact that God has commanded it.”

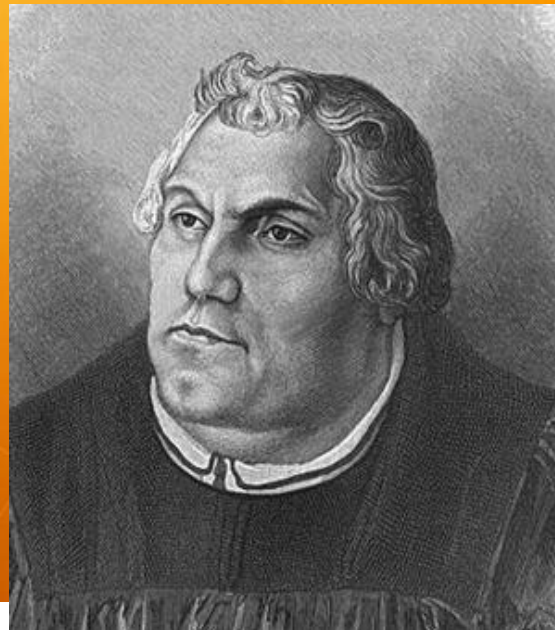
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“The Anabaptists are right, the Baptism without faith profits nothing, and that thus in fact children ought not to be baptized if they have no faith.”

Luther on Baptism

- You can't force anything on any one, superimpose on them some required religious duty, not in Scripture. That's how Luther started. However, by 1527 he turned back to the state church because he was afraid he needed to maintain oneness of doctrine in order to maintain solidarity and power, political military power. So as it had through the Dark Ages from the fourth century on, the church became buried in the state church and essentially the state church extinguished the true church

<http://www.gty.org/resources/sermons/80-369/Is-Infant-Baptism-Biblical?Term=infant%20baptism>



Calvin on Baptism

- Addressed how infant baptism relates to regeneration and conversion.
- “Those infants who are to be saved — as some are surely saved from that early age — are previously regenerated by the Lord. For if they bear with them an inborn corruption from their mother’s womb, they must be cleansed of it before they can be admitted into God’s kingdom, for nothing polluted or defiled may enter there.”
- As for repentance and faith, elements necessary for conversion and to receive baptism, Calvin appealed to the circumcision of Jewish infants: “Since God communicated circumcision to infants as a sacrament of repentance and faith, it does not seem absurd if they are now made participants in baptism. For although infants, at the very moment they were circumcised, did not comprehend with their understanding what that sign meant, they were truly circumcised for the putting to death of their corrupt and defiled nature, a putting to death that they would afterward practice in mature years.”
- “Infants are baptized into future repentance and faith. And even though these have not yet been formed in them, the seed of both lies hidden within them by the secret working of the Spirit.”

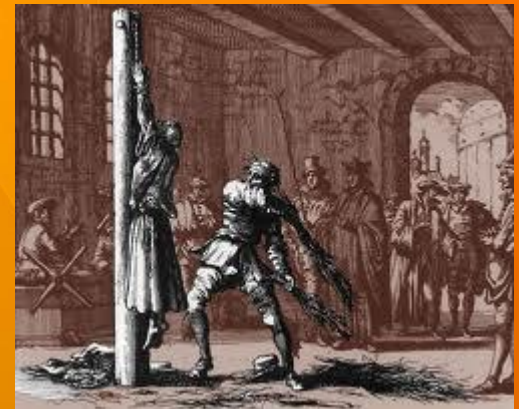
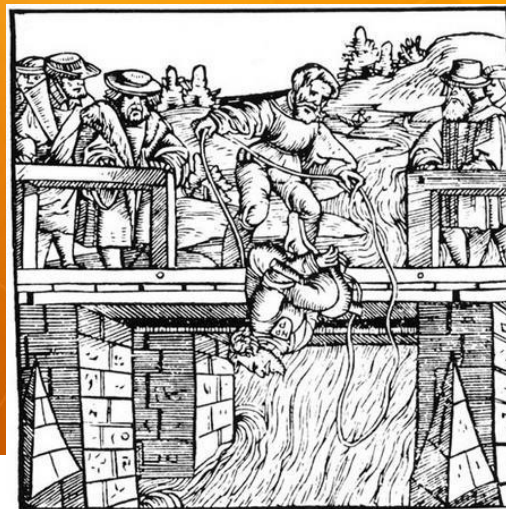


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The State on Baptism

A law of the Emperors Honorius and Theodosius II in the year 413 says, "If any person is convicted of having undertaken the rebaptism of a member of the Catholic Church, the one who has committed this shameful crime together with the one provided he is of accountable age who has allowed himself to be baptized shall be punished with death without mercy."

The city law for Hanover, Germany, and other German cities with the specific approval of Luther and Melanchthon, called for all rebaptizers to be beheaded. The Zwinglians and Baptists were to be flogged and banished from the city forever. They saw believers baptism as disrupting the national church, posing a threat to national solidarity and being a blasphemous heresy that would corrupt others and break the power of the nationalized church. All over Germany, rebaptizers were called devilish vermin and executed.

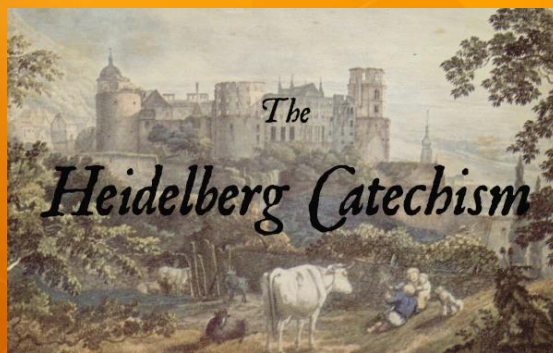


Heidelberg Catechism on Baptism

Question 74

“Shall one baptize young children also? Yes, for they, as well as the old people, appertain to the covenant of God in His church and in the blood of Christ the redemption from sins and the Holy Spirit who works faith has promised not less than to the older.”

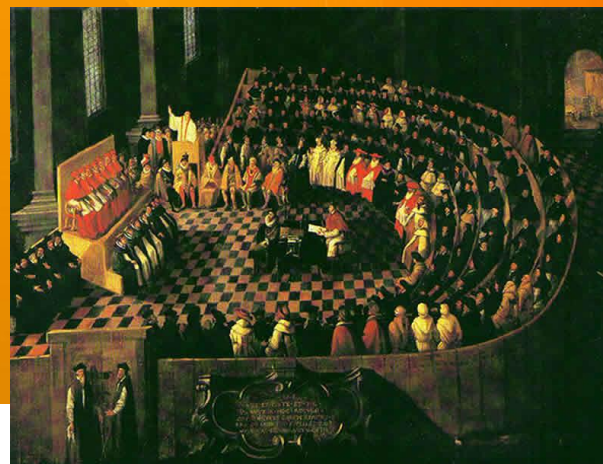
“Therefore shall they also through Baptism as the sign of the Covenant be incorporated in the Christian church and be distinguished from the children of unbelievers as in the Old Testament took place by circumcision.”



Council of Trent on Baptism

- Mixing together justification, sanctification, regeneration, conversion, and baptism, the Council of Trent asserted this view of salvation:
“Justification itself ... is not remission of sins merely, but also the sanctification and renewal of the inward man, through the voluntary reception of the grace, and of the gifts, by which an unjust man becomes just.... Of this justification, the ... instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which [faith] no man was ever justified.”
- Relying upon the concept of prevenient grace, the council insisted that this salvation is the result of a cooperative effort between God, who supplies grace, and human beings who take advantage of that grace:
“They, who by sins were alienated from God, may be disposed through his quickening and assisting grace, to convert themselves to their own justification, by freely assenting to and cooperating with that grace.”

Synergism



Anabaptists on Baptism

- Separated regeneration and baptism. Repudiated infant baptism, demanding that only those people who could repent of their sins and make a credible profession of faith in Christ could be baptized.
- Waterland Confession

“This regeneration has its rise from God through Christ. The medium or instrument through which it is generated in us is the Holy Spirit with all his fiery virtues, apart from any cooperation of any creature. Here, concerning the regenerate, we affirm that they are born not out of anything whatsoever that the creature does, but from God; and by it we become children of God.... We believe and teach that this regeneration is necessary to salvation.”

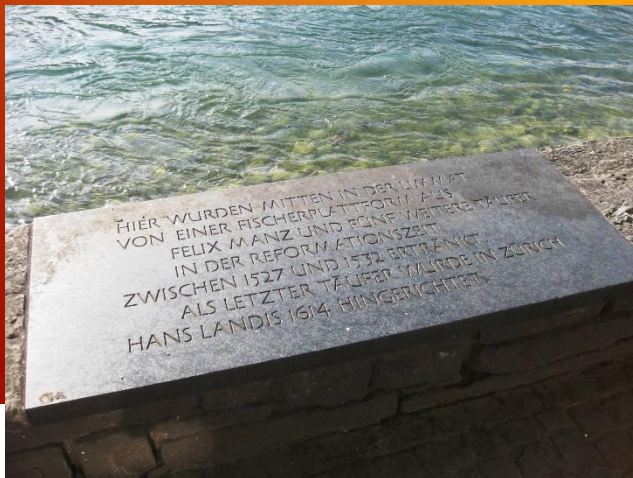
“Holy baptism is an external, visible and evangelical action, in which, according to Christ’s precept and the practice of the apostles, for a holy end, are baptized with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, those who hear, believe and freely receive in a penitent heart the doctrine of the holy gospel. Christ commands such people to be baptized, but by no means infants.”

Allison, Gregg (2011-04-19). Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine (pp. 488-489). Zondervan. Kindle Edition.



Order of Zurich on Baptism

- The Council of Zürich - Order to Baptize Infants on January 18, 1525.
Whereas an error has arisen respecting baptism, as if young children should not be baptized until they come to years of discretion and know what the faith is: and whereas some have accordingly neglected to have their children baptized, our Lords the Burgomaster, Council, and Great Council, have had a disputation held about this matter to learn what Holy Scripture has to say about it. As they have learned from it that, notwithstanding this error, children should be baptized as soon as they are born, all those therefore who have hitherto allowed their children to remain unbaptized, must have them baptized within the next week: and whosoever will not do this, must with wife and child, goods and chattels, leave our city, jurisdiction, and dominions, or await what will be done with him. Every one will accordingly know how to conduct himself.*
- The penalty prescribed was death by drowning, a terrible mockery of the Anabaptist belief. Felix Manz – First drowned in the Limmat River.



“Here in the middle of the River Limmat from a fishing platform were drowned Felix Manz and five other Anabaptists during the Reformation of 1527 to 1532. Hans Landis, the last Anabaptist, was executed in Zürich during 1614.”

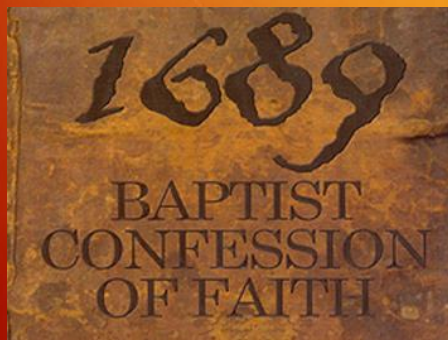
Baptists on Baptism

- Led by John Smyth and Thomas Helwys— from Gainsborough, England. Fled to Holland in 1607.
- Believed that “those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.”
- For Baptists, baptism does not cause regeneration, nor can it be viewed as a sign of some future repentance and faith. It is reserved for those who have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Christ.



London Baptist Confession on Baptism

- Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed upon persons professing faith, or who are made disciples. These, upon profession of faith, ought to be baptized (and after to partake of the Lord's Supper). The way and manner of dispensing this ordinance is dipping or plunging the body under water. Being a sign, it must answer the things signified; which is, that interest the saints have in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. And, as certainly as the body is buried under water, and risen again, so certainly shall the bodies of the saints be raised by the power of Christ, in the day of the resurrection, to reign with Christ.



Wesley on Baptism

- Wesley did not equate baptism with the new birth in the case of adults who are baptized, but did so in the case of infant baptism. However, he also noted that each and every infant eventually grows up to commit personal sin and reject the grace of God. As a result, they lose the eternal life given to them in baptism. This desperate situation calls for them to be born again through an adult conversion to Jesus Christ. Thus, Wesley challenged those who had been baptized as infants not to rely upon that experience for their present salvation.

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Protestant and Catholic Positions?

**Mist in the pulpit
fog in the pews**

Catholic Answers on Baptism

Since the New Testament era, the Catholic Church has always understood baptism differently, teaching that it is a sacrament which accomplishes several things, the first of which is the remission of sin, both original sin and actual sin—only original sin in the case of infants and young children, since they are incapable of actual sin; and both original and actual sin in the case of older persons.

Fundamentalists refuse to permit the baptism of infants and young children, because they are not yet capable of making such a conscious act. But notice what Jesus said: "to such as these [referring to the infants and children who had been brought to him by their mothers] belongs the kingdom of heaven." The Lord did not require them to make a conscious decision. He says that they are precisely the kind of people who can come to him and receive the kingdom. So on what basis, Fundamentalists should be asked, can infants and young children be excluded from the sacrament of baptism? If Jesus said "let them come unto me," who are we to say "no," and withhold baptism from them?

This comparison between who could receive baptism and circumcision is an appropriate one. In the Old Testament, if a man wanted to become a Jew, he had to believe in the God of Israel and be circumcised. In the New Testament, if one wants to become a Christian, one must believe in God and Jesus and be baptized. In the Old Testament, those born into Jewish households could be circumcised in anticipation of the Jewish faith in which they would be raised. Thus in the New Testament, those born in Christian households can be baptized in anticipation of the Christian faith in which they will be raised.

<http://www.catholic.com/tracts/infant-baptism>

NIHIL OBSTAT: I have concluded that the materials presented in this work are free of doctrinal or moral errors.
Bernadeane Carr, STL, Censor Librorum, August 10, 2004
IMPRIMATUR: In accord with 1983 CIC 827 permission to publish this work is hereby granted.
+Robert H. Brom, Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004

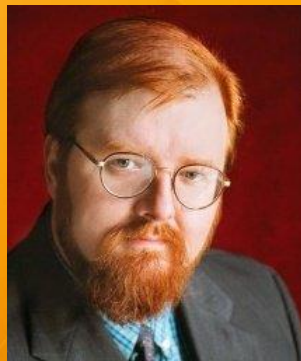
Catholic Answers on Baptism

“The Lord himself affirms that baptism is necessary for salvation [Jn 3:5]. . . . Baptism is necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament [Mk 16:16]” (CCC 1257).

But God has not made baptism necessary in an absolute sense, so that anyone who fails to receive it is lost. Down through history Christians have recognized that there are exceptions, and that it is possible to be saved through “baptism of blood” (martyrdom for Christ) or “baptism of desire” (a desire for baptism that has not yet been received).

<http://www.catholic.com/blog/jimmy-akin/is-baptism-really-necessary>

Jimmy Akin



Comparison between Baptism and Circumcision

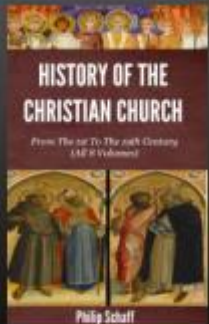
Circumcision	Baptism
Given only to males	Given to men and women
Sign of belonging to the nation of Israel (some of whom are condemned)	Sign of being saved
Tied to ethnicity	Tied to spiritual condition
Meant for spiritual and unspiritual circumcised people – Romans 9:6-8	Meant only for spiritual people.
According to the flesh	According to the Spirit
Binding for Jews even after ascension (Acts 15), but not binding on Gentiles	Binding on all believers – Jew and Gentile

Conclusions

1. In every New Testament command and instance of baptism the requirement of faith precedes baptism. So infants incapable of faith are not to be baptized.
2. There are no explicit instances of infant baptism in all the Bible.
3. Paul (in [Colossians 2:12](#)) explicitly defined baptism as an act done through faith: ". . . having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God."
4. The apostle Peter, in his first letter, defined baptism this way, ". . . not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" ([1 Peter 3:21](#)).
5. When the New Testament church debated in Acts 15 whether circumcision should still be required of believers as part of becoming a Christian, it is astonishing that not once in that entire debate did anyone say anything about baptism standing in the place of circumcision.

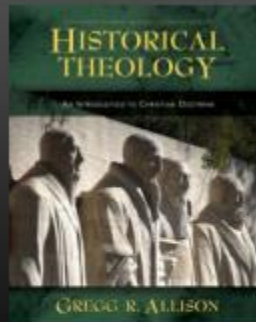
Resources

- <http://www.catholic.com/blog/jimmy-akin/is-baptism-really-necessary>
- <http://www.catholic.com/tracts/infant-baptism>



History of the Christian ...

Philip Schaff



Historical Theology: An I...

Gregg Allison

