

**PAEDOBAPTISM: RELIGIOUS AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
FOR MODERN MAN**

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Abstract

Paedobaptism (infant baptism) has been a subject of controversy in the church for decades. While some argue from the perspective of church tradition and inference, others say it is unbiblical. The task of this paper is to examine the argument for and against infant baptism and the religio-theological implications for the modern man especially as it pertains to his salvation. To achieve this, the paper employs the descriptive and evaluative methods of religious research. It discovers that infant baptism is a negation of biblical concept and practice of baptism, and instead proponents lay claim to the Old Testament circumcision theory of Abraham and the household theory in the New Testament. The paper concludes that infant baptism is religiously and theologically wrong because it denies the child the personal experience of baptism in the future.

KEY WORDS: Infant Baptism, Paedobaptism Religious, Theological

Introduction

Why is it that some religious groups or denominations still condemn infant baptism despite the fact that Jesus clearly commanded people to be baptized (Matt. 28:18-20), yet there is much disagreement about who should be baptized. Some religious groups baptize babies. But others say that, before one is baptized, the person should be old enough to accept the responsibility to make his own decision whether or not to be baptized and to live the Christian life. That is, they teach individual responsibility and personal accountability. Is infant baptism another form of

evangelism? Is it just a way of ensuring that children born into a particular denomination maintain the religious life of that denomination or could it be a discrimination against children, thereby making the child a lesser human person.

The confusion about infants baptism in the various Christian denominations, is not because the Bible presents a confuse message on baptism. The Bible is explicitly clear of what baptism is, who is to be baptized, and what Baptism is set to accomplish. In the Bible, only believers who had placed their faith in Christ were baptized - as a public testimony of their faith and identification with Christ (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4) are baptized by immersion. Water baptism by immersion is a step of obedience after faith in Christ. It is a proclamation of faith in Christ, a statement of submission to Him, and identification with His death, burial, and resurrection. The purpose of this study is to explore what the Bible says about infant baptism.

Baptism: A Conceptual Clarification

The term, "baptism" according to *Wikipedia* is used to describe the Jewish rituals in contrast to New Testament times, while the Greek word *baptismos* indicates Jewish ablutions or rites of purification, the purification rites (or *mikvah* implies ritual immersion). The Jewish laws and tradition have some similarity to baptism, and the two have been linked. In the Jewish Bible and other Jewish texts, immersion in water for ritual purification was established for restoration to a condition of "ritual purity" in specific circumstances. For example, Jews who (according to the Law of Moses) became ritually defiled by contact with a corpse had to use the *mikvah* before being allowed to come into the Holy Temple. Immersion is required for converts to Judaism as part of their conversion. Immersion in the *mikvah* represents a change in status in regards to purification, restoration, and qualification for full religious participation in the life of the community, ensuring that the cleansed person will not impose uncleanness on property or its owners. This change of status by the *mikvah* could be obtained repeatedly, while Christian baptism, like circumcision, is, in the general view of Christians, unique and not repeatable.

Pongratz-Lippitt (2007) opined that the Seventh-day Adventists, however, see baptism as repeatable if a believer comes to a new knowledge of Christianity, as in Acts 19:1–5. They teach that it is also possible for a person who has fallen away from following Christ to make a new commitment via rebaptism. Baptism according to Vaagenes (2005) means dipping or immersing into water. It is assumed that the immersed object became totally identified with the substance, in which it was placed, the idea of identification is central to the meaning of baptism. Chadwick (2001) *asserts that* Jesus' baptism by John publicly identified Him as he who was sinless with sinners in anticipation of His death and resurrection as their sin-bearer. For us, baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection; our identification with Christ's church; and, our cleansing from sin. Baptism is a public confession of faith in Christ, done in obedience to His command, and as such is a picture of what salvation means. Baptism is important because Christ commanded it as a part of the Great

Commission: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). If we neglect baptism, by implication we disobey our Lord. Since true faith always expresses itself in obedience, those who have believed in Christ and have been properly instructed about baptism will obey Christ by being baptized (Guy, 2011).

Baptism, in Guy’s (2004) view, symbolizes total identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. This is Paul’s point in Romans 6:3-4 when he said, “Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.” Baptism is also our identification with the Holy Spirit because we were “baptized into Christ” through the Holy Spirit. This is the work whereby the Holy Spirit places a person “in Christ” at the moment of salvation. So what Paul refers to in Romans 6:3-4 is not water baptism itself, but what it pictures, namely, the baptism of the Holy Spirit? At this instant we believed, we became totally identified with Christ. His death became our death, His burial our burial, His resurrection our resurrection. Going under the water symbolizes death to our old way of life; coming up out of the water pictures the beginning of a new life, lived unto God, in Christ’s resurrection power (Col. 2:11-12).

Baptism symbolizes cleansing from sin. This is the point of 1 Peter 3:18-21 other several Scriptures. Cleansing is obviously a main symbol of water. But it is not immersion in water (or sprinkling, pouring) that cleanses the heart. Peter makes that very clear. Water can only remove dirt from the flesh. It is the blood of Christ which removes the filth from our hearts, because apart from the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). Because baptism is done with water, and water symbolizes cleansing, it is often mentioned in close connection with salvation. In Titus 3:5, Paul refers to God’s saving us “by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.” But in the immediately preceding words he says that God saved us “not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness.” The act of baptism cannot save anyone.

Baptism symbolizes our identification with Christ’s church. In 1 Corinthians 12:13, Paul states, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.” The main reference here, as in Romans 6, is the baptism of the Holy Spirit, when He comes on the believer in Christ at the moment of salvation. We become members of His body, the church. Water baptism symbolizes our identification with the church which took place spiritually at the moment of salvation. In the act of baptism, a person publicly identifies himself with other Christians. He is saying, “Now I’m one of them.”

What is Paedobaptism?

Paedobaptism also called infant baptism, covenant baptism or household baptism is the most common form of baptism practiced in Christianity throughout its history. As the name indicates, it is baptism of infants or children, commonly performed within the first two years of life (Scott, 2000). In Protestant traditions paedobaptism, does not require the active participation of the baptized as with a "believer's baptism", the intent of the act and the liturgies of the worship services surrounding it are quite different from adult or believer's baptism. Whereas a believer's baptism is a willful act of the baptized, infant baptism is considered to be a symbolic as well as mysterious act of God by which a claim is placed upon the child's life by God and the Church. Such a claim does not ensure the salvation of the baptized, as believed within the Roman Catholic Church, but rather follows the Biblical tradition of God's calling people to himself and that the hope of what is to come is not found within the abilities or effectiveness of the baptized but within God himself (www.theopedia.com). Thus the freedom that the Church has to baptize children relies on the basis that God's purposes will be accomplished despite the frailty of the baptized Church. This freedom is confirmed within Reformed theology as a continuance of the sacrament of circumcision under the Abrahamic covenant.

According to Dix (1945) in many Protestant traditions which practice paedobaptism a young adult will re-iterate the commitment of baptism through what is commonly called "confirmation." As a culmination of church classes, and perhaps a more personal mentoring as well, the young adult who has learned the rudiments of discipleship and his or her relationship to God and his people will confirm this understanding and commitment to it as a basis of his or her life.

Baptism: A Comparative Summary of Baptism of Christian Denominations

Below is a comparative summary of baptisms of denominations of Christian influence. (This section does not give a complete listing of denominations):

Denomination	Beliefs about baptism	Type of baptism	Baptize infants?	Baptism regenerates / gives spiritual life	Standard
African Methodist Episcopal Church	Baptism is a regeneration sign and a profession of faith.	Immersion, sprinkling, or pouring	Yes	Yes	Trinity
Anabaptist	Baptism is considered by the majority of Anabaptist Churches	By submersion, immersion or pouring.	No	No. Belief and repentance are believed to precede and follow baptism.	Trinity

	(anabaptist means to baptize again) to be essential to Christian faith but not to salvation. It is considered to be an ordinance. The Anabaptists stood firmly against infant baptism in a time when the Church and State were one and when people were made a citizen through baptism into the officially sanctioned Church (Reformed or Catholic).[citation needed]				
Anglicanism	"Baptism is not only a sign of profession, and mark of difference, whereby Christian men are discerned from others that be not christened, but it is also a sign of Regeneration or New-Birth, whereby, as by an instrument, they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church; the promises of the forgiveness of sin, and of our adoption to be the sons of God by the Holy Ghost, are visibly signed and sealed; Faith is confirmed, and Grace increased by virtue of prayer unto God."	By submersion, immersion or pouring.	Yes (in most provinces)	Yes (in most provinces)	Trinity
Baptists	A divine ordinance, a symbolic ritual, a	By submersion only.	No	No	Trinity

	mechanism for publicly declaring one's faith, and a sign of having already been saved, but not necessary for salvation.				
Brethren	Baptism is an ordinance performed upon adults in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is a commitment to live Christ's teachings responsibly and joyfully.	Immersion only	No	Yes	Trinity
Calvary Chapel	Baptism is disregarded as necessary for salvation but instead recognizes as an outward sign of an inward change	Immersion only	No	No	Trinity
Christadelphians	Baptism is essential for the salvation of a believer. It is only effective if somebody believes the true gospel message before they are baptized. Baptism is an external symbol of an internal change in the believer: it represents a death to an old, sinful way of life, and the start of a new life as a Christian, summed up as the repentance of the believer—it therefore leads to forgiveness from God, who forgives people who repent. Although someone is only baptized once, a believer must live by the principles of their baptism (i.e., death to sin,	By submersion only	No	Yes	The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (although Christadelphians do not believe in the Nicean trinity)

	and a new life following Jesus) throughout their life.				
	Baptism is the remissions for sins, it washes away sins and gives spiritual life; it is a symbolization through the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Churches of Christ have historically had the most conservative position on baptism among the various branches of the Restoration Movement, understanding baptism by immersion to be a necessary part of conversion	By immersion only	No	Yes; because of the belief that baptism is a necessary part of salvation, some Baptists hold that the Churches of Christ endorse the doctrine of <u>baptismal regeneration</u> . However, members of the Churches of Christ reject this, arguing that since faith and repentance are necessary, and that the cleansing of sins is by the blood of Christ through the grace of God, baptism is not an inherently redeeming ritual. Baptism is understood as a confessional expression of faith and repentance rather than a "work" that earns salvation	Trinity
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	An ordinance essential to enter the Celestial Kingdom of Heaven and preparatory for receiving the Gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands.	By immersion performed by a person holding proper priesthood authority.	No (at least 8 years old)	Yes	Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost (the LDS Church does not teach a belief in the <u>Nicean trinity</u> , but rather a belief in

					the <u>Godhead</u>)
Christian Missionary Alliance[208]	Water baptism identifies a person as a disciple of Christ and celebrates the passage from an old life into a new life in Christ. Simply stated, it is an outward sign of an inward change.	Immersion	No	No	Trinity
Community Churches	Not necessary for salvation but rather is a sign as a Christ's followers. It is an act of obedience to Christ that follows one's acceptance of salvation by God's grace. Baptism is a symbolization of cleansing of the spirit through God's divine forgiveness and a new life through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.	Immersion only	No	Yes	Trinity
Disciples of Christ	Baptism is a symbolization of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. It also signifies new birth, cleansing from sin, individual's response to God's grace, and acceptance into the faith community.	Mostly immersion; others pouring. Most Disciples believe that believer's baptism and the practice of immersion were used in the New Testament.	No	Yes	Trinity
Eastern Orthodox Church	Baptism is the initiator the salvation experience and for the remissions of sins and is the actual	Immersion	Yes	Yes	Trinity

	supernatural transformation				
Evangelical Free Church	An outward expression of an individual's inward faith to God's grace.	Submersion only	No	No	Trinity
Foursquare Gospel Church	Baptism is required as a public commitment to Christ's role as Redeemer and King	Immersion only	No	Yes	Trinity
Grace Communion International	Baptism proclaims the good news that Christ has made everyone his own and that it is only Him that everybody's new life of faith and obedience merges.	Immersion only	No	Yes	Trinity
Jehovah's Witnesses	Baptism is necessary for salvation as part of the entire baptismal arrangement: as an expression of obedience to Jesus' command (Matthew 28:19–20), as a public symbol of the saving faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Romans 10:10), and as an indication of repentance from dead works and the dedication of one's life to Jehovah. (1 Peter 2:21) However, baptism does not guarantee salvation.	By submersion only; typical candidates are baptized at district and circuit conventions	No	No	Jesus
Denomination (continued)	Beliefs about baptism	Type of baptism	Baptize infants?	Baptism regenerates / gives spiritual life	Standard
Lutherans	The entry sacrament into	By sprinkling,	Yes	Yes	Trinity

	the Church by which a person receives forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation	pouring or immersion			
Methodists and Wesleyans	The Sacrament of initiation into Christ's holy Church whereby one is incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation and given new birth through water and the spirit. Baptism washes away sin and clothes one in the righteousness of Christ.	By sprinkling, pouring, or immersion.	Yes	Yes, although contingent upon repentance and a personal acceptance of Christ as Saviour.	Trinity
Metropolitan Community Church	Baptism is conducted in the order of worship.	sprinkling, pouring, or immersion	Yes	Yes	Trinity
Moravian Church	The individual receives the pledge of the forgiveness of sins and admission through God's covenant through the blood of Jesus Christ	sprinkling, pour, or immersion	Yes	Yes	Trinity
Nazarenes	Baptism signifies the acceptance of Christ Jesus as Saviour and are willingly to obey him righteously and in holiness.	sprinkling, pouring, or immersion	Yes	Yes	Trinity
Oneness Pentecostals	Necessary for salvation because it conveys spiritual rebirth.[citation needed] Being baptized is an ordinance directed and established by Jesus and the Apostles	By submersion. Also stress the necessity of a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38; 8:14–17, 35–38)	No	Yes	Jesus

Pentecostals (Trinitarian)	Water Baptism is an ordinance, a symbolic ritual used to witness to having accepted Christ as personal Savior.[citation needed]	By submersion. Also stress the necessity of a "second" Baptism of a special outpouring from the Holy Spirit	No	Varies	Trinity
Reformed (includes Presbyterian churches)	A sacrament and means of grace. A sign and a seal of the remission of sins, regeneration, admission into the visible church, and the covenant of grace. It is an outward sign of an inward grace	By sprinkling, pouring, immersion or submersion	Yes	Yes, the outward means by which the Holy Spirit inwardly accomplishes regeneration and remission of sins	Trinity
Quakers (Religious Society of Friends)	Only an external symbol that is no longer to be practiced	Do not believe in Baptism of water, but only in an inward, ongoing purification of the human spirit in a life of discipline led by the Holy Spirit	—	—	—
Denomination (continued)	Beliefs about baptism	Type of baptism	Baptize infants?	Baptism regenerates / gives spiritual life	Standard
Roman Catholic Church	"Necessary for salvation for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have had the possibility of asking for this sacrament"	Usually by pouring in the West, by submersion or immersion in the East; sprinkling admitted only if the water then flows on the head	Yes	Yes	Trinity
Seventh-day Adventists	Not stated as the prerequisite to salvation, but a prerequisite for becoming a member of the church, although	By submersion.	No	No	Trinity

	nonmembers are still accepted in the church. It symbolizes death to sin and new birth in Jesus Christ. "It affirms joining the family of God and sets on apart for a life of ministry."				
United Church of Christ (Evangelical and Reformed Churches and the Congregational Christian Churches)	One of two sacraments. Baptism is an outward sign of God's inward grace. It may or may not be necessary for membership in a local congregation. However, it is a common practice for both infants and adults.[citation needed]	By sprinkling, pouring, immersion or submersion.[citation needed]	Yes, to indicate membership in the New Covenant.[citation needed]	No	Trinity
United Church of God	Through the laying on hands with prayer, the baptized believer receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a part of the spiritual body of Jesus Christ.	Immersion only	No	No	Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (although members of the United Church of God doctrinally believe in Unitarianism believing that the Holy Spirit is a power of God and Jesus

					Christ rather than a separate person)
Vineyard Churches[238]	A public expression of faith for a person who has committed to follow Jesus. It also symbolizes a person's cleansing of sin and gives a person a chance to openly profess their faith in front of the church, friends, and family.	Immersion only	No (at least		

Source: www.wikipedia.org/wiki/baptism (1/4/2016)

Historical Premises for Infant Baptism

One historical argument against the practice of paedobaptism is the fact that its theological foundation was not developed until Ulrich Zwingli in the sixteenth century. Opponents argued that if baptism is such a prominent theme - if it is commanded of the Church alongside the necessity of so basic a doctrine as repentance - then why did it take more than 1500 years to develop Scriptural support for baptizing infants? (Knight, 2009). According to earlier sources, infant baptism was a topic of discussion during the times of the early church. Without argument, infant baptism was even practiced by some at this time, claiming that the practice was apostolic tradition. Yet Tertullian, who is often recognized as a staunch defender of apostolic traditions, gave no defense for infant baptism. With regard to the *Didache*, which served as an early church manual and instructions support the fact that only adults are baptized? "Before the baptism, moreover, the one who baptizes and the one being baptized must fast, and any others who can. And you must tell the one being baptized too fast for one or two days beforehand.

Another historical argument in support of the baptism of infants comes from the fact that controversy over the practice is conspicuously absent from the history of the early church. There is no question that Origen was baptized as an infant in 180 A.D., just 80 years after the death of the last Apostle, John the Evangelist. There are other possible references to infant baptism at earlier dates, but these references are somewhat unclear in their meaning. Born in the mid fourth century (358 A.D.), Augustine wrote, "This doctrine is held by the whole

church, not instituted by councils, but always retained." Tertullian (*ca.* 155-230) did argue in favor of believer's baptism, but this was in reaction to the un-biblical practice that was being taught in some areas that Christians should wait to be baptized until just before death, and not in reaction to infant baptism (Cole, 1996).

Arguments for Infants Baptism

The first argument for infant baptism according to Stoltz (2005) is that circumcision under the Abrahamic covenant was applied to infants on the basis of parental faith (Gen. 17; Rom. 4:11). He added that since we today are part of that covenant through faith in Christ, the new sign of the covenant, water baptism, should likewise be applied to infants on the basis of parental faith. This connection between circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New, especially as seen in the context of the covenant community is sometimes buttressed with the example of Noah, whose entire family entered the ark and was thus saved from the flood. They argue that there is a connection between 1 Peter 3:20-21 and Noah's flood with baptism.

Also, in 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, Paul states that Israel was baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. Since this included the children, it is argued that they are proper subjects of baptism. But the main argument is the continuity between circumcision in the covenant community under the old covenant and baptism under the new covenant. In Genesis 17:7 God makes it clear to Abraham that He is establishing His covenant both with him and with his descendants ("seed") after him as an everlasting covenant. In verse 12, the Lord stipulates that every male child at the eight day must be circumcised. An uncircumcised male must be cut off from his people because he has broken God's covenant (17:14). Thus the sign of the covenant was commanded to be administered to infants. In Abraham's case, he had already believed in God when the sign was performed; but in Isaac's case, it was done before he was old enough to believe in God's promise, with a view to his believing later.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul states (Col. 2:11-12), "And in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead." Thus he connects circumcision with baptism, and so, it is argued, establishes that baptism has replaced circumcision as the sign of the covenant (Stoltz, 2005).

The second argument according to Ferguson (2009) is the household baptisms recorded in the New Testament (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor. 1:16) where they argued that it surely included infants. In 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul refers to the children as "holy" or "sanctified" in a marriage where one partner is a believer, which is taken to mean that they are a part of God's covenant people, presumably through baptism. The church fathers of the second and third centuries argued for infant baptism as an apostolic tradition. Since it is primarily a covenant sign and not a sign of faith on the part of the one receiving it, it is argued that we should baptize our infants

into the community of faith where they will be exposed to the other means of grace. These are the main arguments for infant baptism.

Arguments against Infants Baptism

Those who advocate believer baptism were also called credobaptist. According to Cole (1996) infant baptism is not baptism at all (even if the infant is immersed). This is because they have a different understanding of baptism. In their view, baptism is principally a testimony given by the person baptized, first in word and then symbolically in water. Since an infant cannot give a testimony, a genuine infant baptism is impossibility. Those against infant baptism argued that the concept of baptism in the New Covenant and the concept of circumcision in the Abrahamic Covenant (Col. 2:11-12) should not be regard as bases for infant baptism. They noted that while there are some parallels between the two signs, there are many differences. The sign of circumcision was administered to the male, physical descendants of Abraham in obedience to the specific command of God. But the New Testament is clear that it is not the physical seed of Abraham who are saved, but the spiritual seed (Rom. 4:16; 9:8; Gal. 3:7). There simply is no command to administer baptism to the physical seed of Christians, male or female. If baptism is the fulfillment of circumcision, then just as circumcision was administered to the physical descendants of Abraham in the age of type, so baptism ought to be administered to the spiritual descendants of Abraham in the age of fulfillment, namely, to believers. But Jesus made it clear that the sign of the New Covenant is the Lord's Supper, not baptism (1 Cor. 11:25) (Schreiner, 2007)

In Colossians 2 Paul is talked about believer's baptism. He specifically states that baptism pictures being raised up from spiritual death through faith in the working of God. The parallel between baptism and circumcision concerns the picture of dying to the flesh or old life so that we can live holy lives in Christ. Paul is taking the spiritual meaning of circumcision and applying it spiritually to believers, not physically to the baptism of believers' children. In 1 Peter 3:20-21, Peter makes it clear that he is not referring to the physical act of baptism, but to what it symbolizes, namely, appealing to God for a good conscience, which infants who are baptized are not doing. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2, Paul is applying the experiences of Israel spiritually to the church. If the Corinthian think that they can claim that their profession of faith in baptism made them right with God, but continue in their ungodly living, they are greatly deceived. The text does not support infant baptism in any way.

The second argument on household baptism by the proponents of the doctrine of infant baptism usually make reference to Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:41) saying that the text implicitly includes infants. However, the credobaptists (those who believe that faith must precede baptism) argue that the context of both passages demonstrates that the conditions for baptism include repentance, hearing the Word, and faithfulness to the Lord (Schreiner, 2007). They argued that the Scripture is clear, that baptism is to adults who believe in Jesus as Savior and Lord are to be baptized in obedience to Him. They point the order in which it was recorded

in the New Testament: The preaching of the gospel; faith in the gospel; then, baptism. And there are *no examples or commands* concerning the baptism of the infants or yet unbelieving children of believing parents. Consider the following verses from Acts, noting the order of belief first, then baptism:

2:41: "... those who had received his word were baptized; ..."

8:12: "But when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike".

8:36-38: "And as they went along the road they came to some water; and the eunuch said, "Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?" [And Philip said, "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 ordered the chariot to stop; and they both went down into the water, Philip as well as the eunuch; and he baptized him".

While verse 37 [in brackets] lacks strong textual support in the earliest Greek manuscripts, its insertion in later manuscripts shows what the church held to be the necessary qualification for baptism.

16:30-34: [The Philippian jailer asks Paul and Silas] "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household. And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house. And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household. And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household.

18:8: "And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with his whole household and many of the Corinthians when they heard believed and being baptized".

If children were baptized that night, the text is clear that they had believed. However, this would be an exceptional case which is not sufficient enough to lay claim to infant baptism in the Church. Thus the abundant testimony of the New Testament is that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ precedes baptism.

Religio-theological Implications for Modern Man

The concept of Infant baptism as practiced by some denomination has strong implications for modern man, in that it negates biblical teaching of soteriology, and technically suggests that salvation can be inherited or transferred from parent to a child. Infant baptism as asserted by Catholicism is salvific, while other adherents of infant baptism do not believe that the baptism of infants confers salvation. Infant baptism also implies that baptism comes before

believe or profession of faith, since the child is not sensible, responsible and accountable for such decision taken on his/her behalf. The implication is that such decision is that of the parents, and the child may grow up and decides otherwise.

Infant baptism has a disobedience implication, as it could be regarded as disobedient to the Lord since it is not commanded in the scriptures. Infant baptism by implication is a forceful imposition of one's faith and belief on the child, whereas salvation is a decision of a person's freewill. Everything we do in Christian religion must be done with Jesus' authority (Col. 3:17). The Scriptures enjoin us to do all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), so that any practice that is not included in God's word, cannot be regarded as a good work. If a practice is not authorized in the New Testament, then it must be of human origin and therefore not pleasing to God (2 John 9; Gal. 1:6-9; Matt. 15:9; Prov. 14:12; etc.).

Suggestions and Conclusion

From the foregoing, infant baptism is the baptism based on the decision of the parent and not the child. The gospel teaches individual responsibility and personal accountability as conditions for baptism. There is no scripture that makes precise reference to infants or children baptism. It may be said that advocates of infant baptism are miss-interpreting the scriptures. Even if infants are dedicated to the Lord as the practice of most Churches today, when they grow up they will still have to make a personal decision to believe in Jesus Christ in order to be baptized.

To baptize an infant is to rob him/her of a very meaningful spiritual experience; namely, the public confession of Christ in obedience to His command after one has come to saving faith. Baptism does not save a person. It does not matter if one is baptized as an adult or infant, or by immersion, pouring, or sprinkling - if you have not first trusted in Christ for salvation, baptism (no matter the method) is meaningless and useless.

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