

CHRISTENING AND INFANT BAPTISM

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Christening comes from the Latin ‘related to Christian’ and it is ‘the practice of baptism as a sign of admission to the church.’

This is the mode of baptism followed by Roman Catholics, Anglicans, Methodists, Lutherans, other German Reformers and Calvinists. Luther actually said that the water at baptism was the water of life and the washing of regeneration. As regeneration means to be born again, this is the teaching that baptism saved and the doctrine of baptismal regeneration. This is also what Augustine taught (*see article on Augustine*)

There is no New Testament teaching that advocates christening or infant baptism. Infant baptism is not taught in the Bible and, therefore, is not a Divine directive. Christening is an invention of the Roman church and copied by other denominations. The claims of Augustine, Luther and Calvin that christening/infant baptism saves for eternity is a doctrine that does not exist in the Scriptures but, rather, is refuted by the Word of God.

Augustine said that if a baby died before christening it was eternally damned whereas a dying infant who obviously had no faith but had been christening would be eternally saved because of the merits of the faith of the church. This is the doctrine that it is the church that saves whereas it is Christ who saves.

There are those who will point us to 1 Peter 3.21 which states that even baptism doth now save us. The salvation here is not the salvation from sin but the salvation from an accusing conscience. The context makes it clear. It is a figure, that is to say a likeness, a pattern, a mental picture, as set out in the proceeding verse with the figure of Noah who committed himself to the ark and so was safely brought through the judgement.

Christian baptism as taught in the New Testament was to follow personal repentance. An infant cannot repent. This teaching is clear from Peter in Acts 2.38, “Repent and be baptised in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ”.

The Lord Jesus’ commission to His disciples was first to teach and that those who responded to the Gospel were baptised on personal repentance. In other they repented themselves. Mark 16.16 also states that baptism followed personal belief. What is abundantly clear is that baptism was for believers who understood for themselves what it meant because they were adults.

Romans 6 is also very evident. It is a burial ; it is dying with Christ ; it is being laid out putting the old man , the sinful flesh to death and when the candidate rises from the water it is symbolic of the new life in Christ. It is also clear from Acts 8, 38 that baptism was in water not with water such as water being sprinkled on the forehead. The one being baptised confessed his faith in the waters of baptism and that he believed in the Lord Jesus.

This is the Biblical pattern. It is the New Testament teaching.

Those who followed this true doctrine in previous times were called Anabaptists and their adherence to true teaching was described as fanatical. The Roman Catholic Church treated them with hostility.

Luther also dismissed believer’s baptism in his bellicose way. He said that infant baptism was justified because even small children could have faith in God and that in the New Testament whole households were baptised which would include children and babies. How does he know this? Is he a clairvoyant?

Household baptism was accepted by a minority in the Brethren movement some 350 years later but on the basis that it introduced households to the significance of baptism. There is no evidence in the New Testament that babies and children were baptised.

Luther's argument may be based on Old Testament or covenant theology and that infant baptism in the New Testament was akin to circumcision in the Old Testament. He said that infant baptism was an established Church tradition that could not be gainsaid. But, bearing in mind his beliefs in predestination and election his views on infant baptism is contradictory. Predestination and election says that God chose before the foundation of the world who was going to be saved and who was going to be rejected into hell so that the baptism of infants in order to get them into Heaven is at cross purposes with the predestination doctrine. Luther also said that a Christian should be willing to be damned if it is God's Will which makes no sense at all.

It is not generally known that Luther was anti-Semitic and hated the Jews. He wrote that all that Jews do was to eat peaches and fart.

Calvin said that infant baptism guaranteed a permanent means of forgiveness. That being so, does God forgive them and save them all?

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