

The Biblical Substantiation for Infant Baptism

by the Reverend Wayne Vogt

[Presented at the January 1973 Texas-New Mexico Pastoral-Delegate Conference.]

There is one question which has seriously bothered many sincere Christians for many years. And that is the question of whether God wants us to baptize infants. Perhaps the reason that this question has come about is that God nowhere says in the Bible in so many words, "Thou shalt baptize infants," or "Thou shalt not baptize infants." I'm sure that many times we have wished that He had said it in those words. But as it is, we must take all of the passages of Scripture which apply to the question, and make a conclusion on the basis of them as to what God wants us to do. I'm sure that after we have studied the passages which apply, the conclusion will be apparent.

In writing this paper, I am obviously going to be biased toward the conclusions which I made during my research. There is no way of avoiding this. In fact, the very title of the paper which was assigned is biased in that direction. Yet, it is worthwhile to write and study this paper to see why I am "biased." It is profitable to see why I and many other Christians have come to the conclusion that God does want us to baptize infants. That is the purpose of this paper...to show why I believe in the baptism of infants.

In answering that question, we are going to study seven different basic reasons. After we have completed the study of this paper, see if you can list those seven different reasons without referring to the paper.

I. Children are sinful.

One of the basic arguments of those who oppose infant baptism is that they claim that children have no need for baptism. They claim that children are innocent of all sin. Many of them, in effect, contradict themselves by saying in one sentence that children are sinners, but then say that they aren't guilty until they reach a certain age called the age of accountability. They claim children aren't guilty of sin until they are old enough to understand right from wrong.

But the Bible knows of no such thing. It is impossible to separate sin from guilt for sin. If one is sinful, he's also guilty of sin. He may not be aware that he's guilty, but he's still guilty. Nowhere does the Bible make an exception for children or for anyone else, just because they might be ignorant of what God has commanded or forbidden.

In fact, the Bible says just the opposite. The Bible tells us that we inherit a sinful nature from our parents, already from birth. God tells us, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" (Jn. 3:6). In other words, whoever is born of sinful parents is also going to be sinful. Just as we inherit other features from our parents, such as a nose, eyes, ears, etc., so also do we inherit this sinful nature from our parents. In fact, when we look elsewhere in the Bible, we see that this sinful nature which is inherited is present even before we are born. It is present in us from the moment of our conception. We're told that in Psalm 51:5, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." That clearly tells us that we're guilty of sin from the moment of our conception. (It does not mean that the act of sex is sinful, because sex within marriage is honorable in God's sight. Cf. Heb. 13:4, Gen. 2:28.) That Psalm tells us beyond all doubt that we inherit sin from our parents.

The Bible, furthermore, tells us that this inherited sin traces all of the way back to the sin of Adam and Eve. Every person ever born on the face of this earth has, therefore, been born with this inherited sin. That can be seen shortly after Adam and Eve's sin, when they gave birth to Seth. We see that Seth was not created holy (in the image of God) as Adam and Eve had been, but that he was born in the image of Adam, which was already at that time sinful. "And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image; and called his name Seth" (Gen. 5:3). That immediately tells us that Seth was born in sin. Later in the book of Genesis, we are told several times that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). Clearly, the Old Testament tells us that man is born sinful.

But there are also a number of passages in the New Testament which tell us that man's sinful nature is inherited from his ancestors all of the way back to Adam. We read in Rom. 5:18, "Therefore as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life." That passage points out that by one man's offense (Adams sin) everyone is condemned. Notice that it says everyone. It doesn't exclude children. It doesn't say that they're exempted until they reach an age of accountability. Everyone stands condemned. Everyone is in need of salvation, even children.

We will make just one other point proving that infants are guilty of sin, namely this: They die. The very fact that an infant can die proves that it is guilty of sin, because death is the result of sin. If it were holy, it wouldn't die, either. "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). That passage clearly tells us that whenever someone dies, it is evidence of the fact that he inherited sin from that one man, namely Adam. Another passage expresses that same thought. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Cor. 15:22). All of us have inherited sin from Adam. And that includes infants. The very fact that they can die proves this.

So these different passages all tell us that children are guilty of sin. They, therefore, do have a need for baptism. They are not innocent, as so many people claim. The Bible always speaks of man as sinful and totally corrupt until he's re-born. We baptize infants because they need to have their sins washed away just as much as anyone else does.

II. Children can Believe.

Another reason why we baptize children is that they can believe in Jesus. Many people would disagree with that statement. Many don't think that children can believe, and say that children should not, therefore, be baptized. They say that children are too little to believe...that children are not intelligent enough to believe. They say that one must reach an age of understanding before he can believe. But the Bible points out to us in many different places that children can believe.

The first thing that we must understand is that faith isn't synonymous with intelligence. They aren't at all the same thing. One can have intelligence without faith. I'm sure we all know of people who know their Bible, but don't believe it. Faith and intelligence are not synonymous. They are independent from one another. In fact, man's natural intelligence is actually opposed to faith. Man's reason tells him that Christianity is foolishness. "For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness" (I Cor. 1:22-23). Man's intelligence says that he's not very smart if he believes in a Trinity, or a God-man, or the existence of a heaven, etc. Those things are matters purely of faith. They have nothing to do with man's intelligence. In fact, the Bible tells us that faith and natural intelligence are really at odds with each other.

What faith is can perhaps best be described as complete trust. When we think of it that way, we know that a child trusts its parents, even when it is very small. It is not difficult for us to see then how God could move that child to have that kind of complete trust, or faith, in Him, even without what we commonly think of as intelligence.

Understanding that, we realize that God's grace is really far beyond our intelligence. It takes a special revelation from the Holy Ghost to enable us to even begin to realize His grace. Mere intelligence is not enough. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God" (I Cor. 2:9-10,14). God's grace goes far beyond our small intelligence. It takes far more than intelligence to have faith. It takes a miracle of God working in our hearts, and God is just as able to work that miracle in the heart of an infant as He is to do it in the heart of an adult.

We could illustrate the fact that faith and intelligence aren't synonymous in another way. Adults have faith while they are sleeping. They may not be conscious and may not be using their intelligence at all, yet they

can have faith while they are asleep. Faith can be and is present even when we are not using our powers of reason. So it is also with infants.

Another thing we must remember when talking about whether or not children can believe is that the Bible states that anyone who does not believe is going to be eternally lost. If people say that children can't believe in Christ, aren't they, therefore, also saying that children are lost if they should die? The Bible knows of only two positions. Either one believes or he does not believe. If one believes in Christ, he's going to be saved. If he doesn't, he's going to be lost. This we're told most clearly in Mk. 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The Bible knows of no neutral position. Anyone who does not believe is an unbeliever. The absence of faith is unbelief. Think of that before saying too strongly that children can't believe!

There are other places where the Bible tells us that faith is the only means of salvation. "He that believeth on Him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (Jn. 3:18. cf. also v. 14-16, v. 36, Jn. 8:24, I Jn. 5:1). These passages tell us over and over again that the only way to receive the eternal gifts which God has promised to us is through faith. And it doesn't anywhere make an exception for children. The Bible doesn't speak of a different way for them to be saved. They are saved through faith in Christ just as anyone else is. Children can believe.

That thought is implied in many other ways throughout the Bible. We know definitely that God's kingdom includes little children. Jesus expressed that thought on several different occasions, particularly when the disciples began to object to those who brought little children to Jesus. There He said, "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mk. 10:14). God's kingdom definitely includes little children. And if we look into one of the parallel accounts of that incident, we see that St. Luke specifically calls these children infants, "And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when his disciples saw it, they rebuked them" Luke 18:15. That tells us that the children were very young. And yet, Jesus felt that it was important that He see them and bless them. He even commends the faith of those little children as being greater than the faith of adults, "Whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it at all" (Luke 18:17, New American Standard Translation). Jesus certainly didn't feel that it was impossible for a little child to believe. In fact, He says they can believe in Matt. 18:6, "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Can little children believe? Certainly!

One other passage in Scripture states rather plainly that it's possible for infants to believe. That's I Jn. 2:13, "I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father." Even though little children aren't intelligent...even though they haven't studied God's Word, yet they can know and believe in God.

And the reason that this is possible is that faith is a miracle worked by the Holy Spirit. It is something worked by God in our hearts. And who is to limit God and say that he can't work faith in the heart of an infant? Especially when He says that He does so? In fact, when we stop to think about it, it's probably "easier" for Him to work faith in the heart of an infant than it is to do so in the heart of an adult with all of our understanding and intelligence saying that Christianity is foolishness. One last evidence that the Holy Spirit is able to work in the heart of an infant is the case of John the Baptist before his birth. "And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost.... 'For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.'" (Luke 1:41 & 44). That passage isn't necessarily saying that John the Baptist was brought to faith then, but it does illustrate to us that the Holy Spirit is able to work in the heart of an infant, even before it is born. So when God says that He can work faith in the heart of infants, why not simply take Him at His Word. Infants can believe.

Some will perhaps object that none of the above passages speak specifically of baptism. And they don't. Yet, they are very important to a discussion of infant baptism, because they shatter the arguments of those who say that infants can't believe and therefore shouldn't be baptized. Infants can believe.

III. Baptism is a Saving Act of God...Not an Act of Obedience of Men.

Another point that we must constantly remember in regard to baptism is that it is a saving act of God, not an act of obedience of man. Simply put, baptism is something which God does for us, not something which we do for God. And that is an especially important point for us to remember regarding infant baptism, because if baptism is something which we do for God, then it would be a willful act of obedience which a child would have to desire to do, and therefore would have to be old enough to request baptism. But in baptism, as well as in regard to the saving Gospel in general, man is merely the recipient. We aren't giving, but are receiving in baptism. And the reason that we are receiving in baptism is that in our natural state, we are dead in sin. Someone who's dead physically has to be brought to life from the outside. Take a dead animal along the road, for example. That animal doesn't even desire to be alive. That's what we were like, by nature. We were spiritually dead. We didn't even desire to be alive. But then God came from the outside and through the Gospel and through baptism brings us to life. That's why baptism is often spoken of as being a new birth...that we're reborn. We were once born physically and were alive physically. But we were dead spiritually until we were born the second time.

That's what Jesus was telling Nicodemus in Jn. 3:3-5, "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." We are re-born through Baptism. God brings us from spiritual death to spiritual life. It's something which God does for us, not an act of obedience on our part in which we do something for Him.

Another passage which very clearly shows us that baptism is something that God works in us is the one which was quoted by Luther in his explanation of baptism. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour" (Tit. 3:5-6). Baptism isn't a good work which we do. It's an act whereby we receive something from God. We are purely the recipients. And since we merely receive in baptism, infants can also take part in it. They can also be recipients of the blessings of baptism, through faith.

And the blessings which are received are the blessings of forgiveness of sins and eternal life. They are the blessings which infants need as much as anyone else does. These blessings are outlined in many different places in the Bible, where the Bible was speaking about Baptism. On the day of Pentecost, Peter told the new converts, "Repent, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Or when Paul was telling about his conversion, he said that Ananias had told him, "Arise, and be baptized and wash away thy sins" (Acts 22:16). Through baptism, we are able to have our sins washed away. Another passage which beautifully expresses the saving power of baptism is I Pet. 3:21, "Baptism doth also now save us" (cf. also Eph. 5:26, Rom. 6:3, I Cor. 6:11). All of these passages show the blessings which are received through baptism...blessings which everyone needs, young and old. And none of these passages speak of baptism as an act of obedience or as something which we are doing for God. They all speak of God as doing this for us. We are nothing more than the recipients. And anyone who is a believer receives these blessings through baptism.

Thus far, we have mostly answered the objections of those who say that we shouldn't baptize infants. We have been spending most of our time showing why their reasons for not baptizing infants aren't reasons which are validly based upon Scripture. We've spent most of our time showing why "they're wrong." Now let's spend some time showing why "we're right."

IV. Whole Families were Baptized in the Bible

The first of these reasons is that we're told in several different situations in Scripture that whole families of people were baptized at one time. For example, when Lydia was converted to Christianity, we're told, "she was baptized, and her household..." (Acts 16:15). True, we're not told how many children there were in the household, and what ages they were, but that statement seems to at least say that there were children present. We read the same thing of the jailer of Philippi in Acts 16:33, "And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway." We are told the same thing of the family of Stephanas, I Cor. 1:16, "And I baptized also the household of Stephanas." In none of these households are we told the ages of the families. Yet it seems very unlikely that out of these three households there would not be some small children present. That's especially true when we consider the fact that often more than one family lived in a household, plus the fact that the households often also included a number of servants and their families. We, of course, wouldn't want to attempt to prove infant baptism on the basis of those passages alone, but they provide strong supporting evidence, when they are added to the other evidences.

V. Baptism Replaced Circumcision.

Perhaps the strongest support of infant baptism, in my estimation, is the fact that Baptism replaced Old Testament circumcision. When we look into the Old Testament, when God first commanded circumcision for His people, we see that He told them how old the child was to be when he was circumcised. "And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you" (Gen. 17:12). And we see that ceremony was followed right up to the time of Christ, because Christ Himself was circumcised on the eighth day, "And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called Jesus" (Luke 2:21). Circumcision was performed when the child was only eight days old.

But we see that when Christ came, He later did away with circumcision. His doing away with that ceremony was to indicate that He was here and had fulfilled everything circumcision pointed forward to. And we see that baptism was the ceremony which Jesus instituted in its place. This we're told in Col. 2:11-12. "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands (baptism), in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ (the "circumcision" which Christ commanded, namely baptism); buried with him in baptism" (Parentheses mine.). That passage is speaking about a new type of "circumcision" which Christ commanded. It wasn't the old physical circumcision. In fact, if we look elsewhere in the N.T. we're told emphatically that the O.T. circumcision was abolished completely (cf. Gal. 2:3, 5:6, I Cor. 7:18-19). And in place of the circumcision which Jesus did away with, He commanded baptism, according to the above passage. In simple words, Jesus replaced circumcision with baptism.

Now if baptism has replaced circumcision, and circumcision was performed when the child was only eight days old, wouldn't any argument against infant baptism also have to be applied against infant circumcision? For example, the argument that we should wait until children are old enough to request baptism. Or that children can't believe and therefore shouldn't be baptized. Or that children are innocent and don't need baptism. All of these arguments seem to fall by the wayside when we see that God commanded infants to be circumcised. Shouldn't infant circumcision tell us something about infant baptism?

VI. Children are a Part of "All Nations."

Another important reason why we baptize infants is that Jesus has commanded us to baptize "all nations." "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt. 28:20). Children are certainly a part of "all nations." And when Jesus commanded us to teach and baptize all nations, He didn't make any exceptions. He didn't exclude the children. Nor are we told of any exceptions that He made in the account recorded by St. Mark, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mk. 16:16). Notice from that how important Jesus felt baptism to be. He placed it on a par with faith itself. And notice also that He didn't exclude children. In fact, nowhere in the Bible are we commanded to exclude children from Baptism. Those who say we dare not baptize children can't point to anyplace that the

Bible forbids it. Let's place the burden of proof on their shoulders. It seems to be that with all of the evidence that we have in favor of infant baptism, that's where the burden of proof should lie.

VII. Church History Shows that Infant Baptism was Common in the Early Christian Church.

One additional proof in favor of infant baptism really goes beyond the scope of this paper, since this paper was only assigned to be the Biblical substantiation. But we will study it anyhow. That is the evidence which we have from church history that infant baptism was common in the early Christian church. We certainly do not base our doctrine merely on what the Church Fathers taught. We base our teachings only on Scripture. Yet, it is worthwhile to study how the early Church Fathers interpreted what the Bible taught regarding Baptism of infants.

It is a firmly documented fact, questioned by almost no one, that infant baptism has been widely practiced since at least 250 A.D. And there are several historical sources which are prior to that date which establish quite clearly that infant baptism was common throughout the first and second centuries also.

One of these was the church father, Irenaeus. He said this in a reference made to baptism; "For He (the Lord) came to save all of them through himself; all of them, I say, who through him are born again in God, the infants, and the small children, and the boys, and the mature, and the older people."¹ Irenaeus wrote that statement sometime before his death, which was about 200 A.D. From his statement, it seems quite apparent that infant baptism was commonly practiced then. Worthy of note is the fact that Irenaeus was a student and close friend of Polycarp, who was a student of the Apostle John. There was less than a hundred years between the time of John and the time of Irenaeus. Furthermore, Irenaeus was highly regarded as a theologian and was one of the more doctrinally correct of his day.

Origen, who died about 250 A.D., wrote this, "The church received from the apostles the tradition to give even little children to baptism."² Notice from this that Origen simply assumes that infant baptism is a common thing. He doesn't go to any long discussion of the subject to defend it. He simply declares that it was a common practice which went back to the time of the Apostles.

Tertullian, who died about 225 wrote a full length paper on the subject of baptism. In that paper, he didn't reject infant baptism as being invalid, but stated that he preferred to see baptism delayed, lest the baptized and the sponsors fail to fulfill their promises. "Let them (children) 'come' therefore when they grow older; let them 'come' when they are able to learn, when they can be instructed whither they should 'come;' let them become Christians when they can know Christ."³ It is also interesting to note that Tertullian preferred to see Virgins and Widows postpone baptism until after a time when they would be less likely to be tempted. Tertullian's reasons for delaying baptism were faulty. He viewed baptism as somewhat of a burden, rather than something which offered strength to withstand temptations. Little wonder that he wanted baptism delayed. Another of his reasons for delaying baptism was his faulty presupposition that the children born of Christian parents were holy. "Why does the age of innocence hasten to the remission of sins?"⁴ We have already seen that that reason for delay of baptism isn't Biblical.

And yet, the very treatment that Tertullian gives to infant baptism indicates that it was commonly practiced in his day. It is apparent from what he wrote that infant baptism was not something new, or he would have definitely argued against it on that basis. But he didn't once even imply that it hadn't been previously practiced. It had to be an old, established practice or one of his best arguments would have been that the church and the Apostles hadn't previously practiced infant baptism. So even though Tertullian preferred to see baptism postponed, what he wrote about baptism tells us clearly that infant baptism was common in his day.

Another church Father who made several statements about baptism, Hippolytus, made this statement about 215 A.D., "First you should baptize the little ones. All who can speak for themselves, should speak. But for those who cannot speak, their parents should speak, or another who belongs to their family. Then baptize the grown men, lastly the women" (Apostolic Traditions, 21, 4f.). That statement makes it rather obvious that infant baptism was something which was commonly practiced at that time. Only by a long drawn-out process of rather incredible arguments can one say otherwise.

One final historical source will be referred to. About 250 A.D., Bishop Fidus asked the question of the Council of Carthage whether baptism ought to wait until the eighth day. The council agreed that it should not arbitrarily be delayed until then (Epistle 64, 2-6). That tells us beyond all doubt that infant baptism was widely practiced at that time. There was no heated debate whether infants should be baptized. It was universally accepted. It was merely a question of whether they should wait unto the eighth day as God had prescribed for O.T. circumcision. After that Council meeting, there is much more documented evidence that infants were commonly being baptized...so much evidence that even those opposed to infant baptism don't dispute that it was widely practiced after 250 A.D.

One question we might raise to those who claim that infant baptism wasn't practiced by the Apostles and the early church. If they didn't practice infant baptism, when did it begin? We can hardly imagine something like that just creeping in unnoticed. And yet, none of the church Fathers raised any objections to infant baptism except Tertullian, and he did only in a limited way, not once claiming it to be something new. Certainly those men wouldn't have allowed something like that to creep in unchallenged, if it hadn't been practiced by the Apostles. None of them objected that infant baptism was something new. Infant baptism must have been so taken for granted that nobody even considered questioning it. In fact, infant baptism was never really widely questioned until about the time of the Reformation.

Perhaps this would also tell us why the Bible never specifically mentions the baptism of infants. It was simply assumed to be the case. When households were baptized, it was simple assumed that everyone was baptized. No specific cases of infants being baptized alone were mentioned because they were included with the remainder of the family, just as the Bible doesn't in those cases single out the teenagers in the families.

So we have considered the seven basic reasons why we baptize infants. See if you can name them without looking back. Now let's consider some miscellaneous items about infant baptism.

The subject of how the water is applied is a topic beyond the scope of the assigned paper, and one which could well be as lengthy as this whole paper. Yet, the question does apply here, because some say that infants were not baptized because immersion was the only type of baptism used, and they would hardly immerse an infant. First of all, immersion wasn't necessarily the only type of baptism, and secondly, even if it had been, why couldn't infants be immersed briefly?

In regard to the first point, the word "baptize" simply means to "wash." It doesn't say how. In Mark 7:4, we read that pots, pans, and even tables were washed—and the Greek word used there is "baptized." One would hardly immerse a table to wash it. Furthermore, we are not told that there was always enough water present to immerse while baptizing, as on Pentecost, the baptizing of Lydia and her family, the baptizing of the Jailer of Philippi, etc. Besides, even if immersion had been the more common type of baptism, infants could still be immersed. The question of immersion has little to do with infant baptism.

Another miscellaneous item asked about in baptism is the question, "Is baptism necessary for salvation?" To that question we answer "yes" and "no." Jesus says, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:5). Clearly, according to that, anyone who rejects baptism will be lost. That's what the Pharisees, about whom he was speaking, were doing. And yet we see Jesus saying to the thief on the cross, "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42). It is highly unlikely that that thief was baptized. So we conclude that it is the rejection of Baptism, not necessarily the lack of baptism which condemns.

This would help us to answer the question of whether infants are lost if they should die before they are able to be baptized. We can give believing parents every comfort that their child is in heaven, because they have been praying for the salvation of that child since its conception, and God promises to answer the prayers of believers. They don't believe in place of the child, but they do pray that God would give that child faith, and God will grant such a prayer. That comfort, we can't give, of course, to the unbelieving parents who lose a child, because they haven't been praying for that child's salvation. We might also point believing parents to the Old Testament circumcision. Certainly the children of believers were not condemned if those children happened to die during the first eight days after they were born. Here we might think of David's child which died at the age

of seven days, but whom David stated he would see again in heaven (II Sam. 12: 15-23, esp. v. 23). To summarize, it isn't the lack of baptism but the rejection of baptism which condemns.

Another miscellaneous item we might consider is the abuse of infant baptism which many people are guilty of. There are many people who seem to view baptism as some sort of a magic formula. They seem to feel that if a child is baptized, he's automatically got a ticket to heaven. These people want their children baptized, and may go to great lengths to get their child baptized. But then they won't pray with their children, study the Bible with their children, or take them to church. But baptism is of benefit to a person only through faith in the Gospel. Without the Gospel used in connection with baptism during the child's life, he won't benefit from the sacrament. Notice that Jesus says that he who believes and is baptized will be saved, but he who believes not will be lost, regardless of whether he was baptized. Parents ought to be reminded that their Christian responsibilities don't end with baptism. Baptism is only the beginning.

One final question which many people ask in regard to infant baptism is, "How can sponsors believe in place of the child?" The answer is, "They don't." No one can believe for another person. Yet, they are able to answer the questions we ask in administering baptism, because we know that a child is able to believe. They merely state the answers to the questions in the way the child would if he were old enough to speak. This is a perfectly fine custom. Yet, I have a preference for the order of service which doesn't ask the sponsors to answer in the child's name, simply because it avoids this misunderstanding among observers, particularly in an area of the country which has a strong concentration of Baptist people.

There are good purposes for sponsors. They later serve as witnesses to the child should he ever wonder whether he was baptized. And very importantly, they assist in raising the child in faith. This means that they are to remind the parents of their responsibility if the parents become lax, but especially are they responsible for the faith of the child if the parents die. Having sponsors isn't commanded in Scripture. It is only a man-made custom. Yet, it serves some excellent purposes.

So, back to the main thrust of this assignment. What is "The Biblical Substantiation for Infant Baptism?" What are the seven basic reasons why we baptize infants? 1. They are sinful. 2. They can believe. 3. Baptism is a saving act of God-not an act of obedience of men. 4. Whole families were baptized in the Bible. 5. Baptism replaced circumcision. 6. Children are a part of "all nations." 7. Church history shows that infant baptism was common in the early Christian church.

End Notes

¹. "Omnes enim venit (Dominus) per semetipsum salvare: omnes inquam, pui per eum renascuntur in Deum, infantes, et parvulos, et pueros, et iuvenes, et seniores" (Quoted from Joachim Jeremias, p. 62). *Adversus Haereses*, II, 33.2.

². "Ecclesia ab apostolis traditionem suscepit etiam parvulis baptismum dare." *Commentary on Romans*, V, 9, Quoted from Professor J. P. Meyer's Seminary Dogmatics notes, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin.

³. "Veniant ergo dum adolescent, dum, discunt, dum quo veniant docentur; fiant Christiani, cum Christum nosse potuerint (ibid)." *De baptismo*, 18, as cited in Aland, p. 61.

⁴. "Quid festinat innocens aetas ad remissionem peccatorum?" *De baptismo*, 18, 5, as quoted from Aland, p. 61.

Bibliography

- Aland, Kurt, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1963. (Aland concludes there was no infant baptism at that time.)
- Jeremias, Joachim, *The Origins of Infant Baptism*. Alec. R. Allenson, Inc., 635 East Ogden Ave., Naperville, Ill. 1963. (Jeremias concludes there was infant baptism back to the time of the Apostles.)
- Koehler, E.W.A. *A Summary of Christian Doctrine*. Distributed by Rev. Louis H. Koehler, 14400 Parkgrove Ave., Detroit 5, Michigan 1952.
- Pieper, F. *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. III, Concordia Publ. House, St. Louis, MO., 1953.
- Schlink, Edmund, *The Doctrine of Baptism*, Concordia Publ. House, St. Louis, MO., 1972.