

THESIS ABSTRACT

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

Adventist University of Africa

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Title: THE ROLE OF FAITH IN INFANT BAPTISM: A COMPARATIVE
STUDY OF MARTIN LUTHER AND JOHN CALVIN

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Scholars have been debating on the practice of infant baptism since it became a doctrine during the Protestant reformation. The core of the debate anchors on the role that faith plays in baptism. Although Martin Luther and John Calvin oppose some tenets of the Roman Catholic Church's practices and theology, they do not contend the practice of infant baptism. Instead, they attempt to develop theologies to settle the question of faith that baptism requires.

This work sought to examine, compare, and contrast the theologies of Luther and Calvin on the role that faith plays in the practice of infant baptism, and ascertain their effects on Christianity.

This work concludes that Luther and Calvin are unable to substantiate their arguments with any explicit biblical passage because their doctrine of infant baptism has no ground in the New Testament. Christ's mandate to His disciples to preach the gospel and baptize states, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark

16:16). This command requires the recipients of baptism to hear the preaching, express their faith in Christ, and then be baptized. Since infants lack these prerequisites, they are therefore unqualified for baptism; and their baptism becomes unbiblical.

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A thesis

presented in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Master of Arts in Biblical and Theological Studies

by

Augustine Adu-Gyamfi

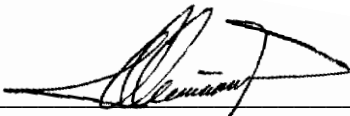
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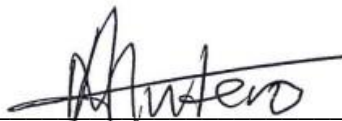
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To the Glory of God.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Almost the entire Christendom recognizes baptism as one of the sacraments.¹ All Christian denominations emphasize the importance of this sacred ordinance in relation to salvation (Mark 16:16).² However, there have been scholarly and biblical debates of the mode and the subject of baptism. While some denominations baptize infants, others oppose the practice due to the inability of the infants to express their faith. Hitherto, a lot of controversy surrounds the role of faith in infant baptism.

The issue of infant baptism demands attention. As Wright points out, a large number of scholars mistakenly take the standard distinction between infant baptism and believer's baptism as one between the baptism of children and adults.³

Thus to be precise, the writer's language of infants does not refer to children in general, but only those children whose ages preclude their responsible baptism; children who are unable to respond for themselves to the baptismal interrogations and

¹Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, ed., and trans. Darrell L. Guder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 2: 586, 587. According to Weber, the term sacrament is not biblical. The New Testament uses the term mystery (mysterion), the term that never refers to the activities, which later came to be referred to as sacrament. He maintains that the concept of sacrament is derived from the sphere of the cultus so much as from that of sacral law. The concept appeared in around the late second century and the early third century in the church's language. Tertullian and Cyprian initiated this term, and later, Augustine took the term and molded it ontologically and soteriologically.

²All the Bible references are from the New International Version (NIV), unless otherwise stated.

³David F. Wright, "One Baptism or Two? Reflection on the History of Christian Baptism," in *Infant Baptism in Historical Perspective: Collected Studies in Christian History and Thought* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 4.

thus bear witness to their personal faith. While some may claim to find traces of infant baptism in the New Testament, the scholarly consensus is that there is no clear, indisputable evidence of the practice is present. On the other hand, there is also no clear indisputable evidence that the practice of infant baptism did not occur in the earliest Christian communities. McGrath opines that it is not clear whether the early church administered baptism of infants.⁴

Infant baptism has been a long-standing debate among theologians in the 16th century. John Calvin and Martin Luther are among theologians in the 16th century who debated on the issue. Scaer posits that the practice of infant baptism attempted to disrupt the Reformation. This is because, on cursory consideration, infant baptism seems to contradict Luther's doctrine of justification.⁵

Both Calvin and Luther subscribe to the practice of infant baptism. They do not entirely reject the sacramental soteriology that undergirds the sacramental argument for infant baptism. They share the conviction that the operation of the sacrament depends on the faith of the recipient, that is, the saving grace.⁶ But they seem to differ on the method; Luther believes that water and the Word of God are essential when baptizing infants whilst Calvin appears to deem the practice as an act of confessing, on behalf of the child's belief.⁷

⁴Alister E. McGrath, *Christian Theology-An Introduction* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 440.

⁵David P. Scaer, "Luther, Baptism, and the Church Today," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 62 (October 1998): 4, accessed 26 October 2014, <http://www.ctsfw.net/media/pdfs/scaerdlutherbaptism.pdf>.

⁶Luis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (1937; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 246.

⁷Luis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 246.

The Scripture does not give direct references to instances where the apostles practiced infant baptism. A few passages in the New Testament seem to support the practice of infant baptism (Acts 16:15, 31; 1 Cor 1:16).⁸ However, Jacnkeiwicz and Johnson assert that infant baptism was from the Catholic tradition.⁹

The date of introduction of paedobaptism into Christendom is unknown. Yet biblical scholars seem to regard Irenaeus' confession of Christ in the second century that "[He] came to save by means of Himself all who through Him are born again unto God, infants, and little children," to be the earliest reference to infant baptism.¹⁰

Battenhouse attempts to suggest that the practice of infant baptism was not prominent in the first four centuries since the church Fathers seemed to be afraid of the candidates to committing sin after baptism.¹¹ W. E. Best seems to submit that the practice became normal by the second or third century AD.¹² The practice of infant baptism appears to have been a response to a number of pressures from believing parents who wanted their children to get baptized to avert the influence of the original sin.

It appears that the doctrine of infant baptism has received a considerable debate in scholarship. However, this work will concentrate on the conception of Luther and Calvin on infant baptism

⁸Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 443.

⁹Darius Jacnkeiwicz and Robert M. Johnson, "Children and Communion," *Ministry*, June 2007, 12.

¹⁰Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1941; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: 1991), 635.

¹¹Roy W. Battenhouse, ed, *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 20.

¹²W. E Best, *The Church Her Authority and Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Belt Assemblies of Christ, 1998), 37.

Definition of Key Terms

Faith: The Greek word “pistes” is translated many times as faith, which means trust, assurance and confidence in another and his word.¹³ Faith can be explained as a personal relationship with a person or thing which is established by trust and trustworthiness. It denotes the faithful relationship of partners in agreement and trustworthiness in their promises.

In the New Testament Greek, It denotes the trusting acceptance and recognition of what God has done and promised to do in Christ.¹⁴

It is a divinely inspired trust in, and commitment to God and to the Holy Scriptures as the authoritative word of God.¹⁵

Baptism: The Greek word *baptizo*, which is translated as baptism in English means to plunge, dip, immerse or insert something in water. This is ordinary recognized and meaning of the term in Ancient Greek literature both inside and outside of the Bible.¹⁶ It is the Christian rite of initiation whereby Christians confess their faith in Christ and are admitted into membership in the Christian church. The rite serves as a sacrament of salvation, a sign of commitment, a symbol of identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection.¹⁷ It also signifies union with Christ in his

¹³Kelvin J Conner, *The Foundations of Christian Doctrines: A Practical Guide to Christian Belief* (England: Sovereign World International, 1980), 257.

¹⁴O. Michel, “Faith” *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (NIDNTT), ed Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 587, 588.

¹⁵John T. Baldwin “Faith, Reason and the Holy Spirit in Hermeneutics” in *Understanding Scripture: An Adventist Approach*, ed. George/W. Reid (Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald, 2006), 15.

¹⁶G.W. Bromiley “Baptism,” *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 1: 410. See also Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (England: Nottingham, Intervarsity Press, 2012), 967.

¹⁷Donald M. Lake, “Baptism” *The New International Dictionary of the Christian*, ed. J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 1: 99.

redemptive acts, entry into the kingdom of God, and life in obedience to the rule of God.¹⁸ Baptism is also a participation in the death and resurrection of Christ, washing away of sin, freedom from bondage and liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division are transcended.¹⁹

Infant Baptism: The practice of baptizing children. It was practiced in the second century, but only to children of professed believers. The baptized infant should also have a sponsor. A full defense of this custom came to expression in the theology of Augustine of Hippo in the late fourth and early fifth centuries. Augustine's development of the doctrine of original sin laid the theological foundation for the practice.²⁰ It is administered to the child not primarily as a sign of repentance and faith on the part of the recipient, but a sign of the work of God on behalf of the child that precedes and makes possible its own responsive movement.²¹

Martin Luther: Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German Reformer and Theologian. He was the architect of the reformation in the 16th century. He carried the marks of true religion and dignified poverty which had characterized his family. He became a Roman Catholic Priest in Augustinian Order and received ordination in 1507. He became a professor of biblical studies at the University of Wittenberg, Germany. He fought against the issues of indulgences and penance. He formed the

¹⁸G.R. Beasley – Murray, "Baptism" *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1988), 1: 70.

¹⁹R.F.G. Burnish, "Baptism" *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 1: 72.

²⁰R.T. Beckwith. "Infant Baptism," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology (NIDNTT)*, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 1: 154. See also Lake "Baptism," *the New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, ed. J.D. Douglas (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1978), 100

²¹G. W. Bromiley "Baptism Infant," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1999), 116.

theology of justification by faith and the priesthood of all believers. He translated the New Testament into the German language, and with the help of other, translated the Old Testament into German. He authored many books; more notable ones are the *Small and Large Catechisms*.²²

John Calvin: John Calvin (1509 -1564) was a reformation Theologian. He was born at Noyon in France. He received training as a humanist lawyer but eventually became the Gospel Minister. He was a prolific writer. He authored commentaries on nearly all books of the Bible. His famous work is the volumes of the *Institutes of the Christian Religion*. He did not claim infallibility or inerrancy to his writings. Calvin believed in the inspiration and divine dictation of the Scriptures. He frowned at the critical approach to the biblical text, and he sparingly used the allegorical approach of interpretation. He was influenced by Augustine of Hippo. He believed in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the total depravity of Humanity and the predestination of human beings. He also believed in the Sacraments of baptism and communion. He justified infant baptism by his view of the unity of the old and new covenants.²³

Paedobaptism: This is the Anglo-Greco word for infant baptism. The prefix “paedo” in Greek means child and baptism means to plunge, dip, immerse or insert something in water.²⁴ Paedobaptism is also referred to as the covenant baptism. It is baptism for a person while an infant or child commonly within two years of life. It is considered to be a symbolic as well as a mysterious act of God through which

²²Atkinson, “Luther Martin,” *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 401-404. See also John Hunt, *Concise Church History* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2008), 315.

²³R.S. Wallace, “Calvin John” *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair B. Ferguson (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1988), 120 -124.

²⁴Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 967.

God and the church place a claim on the child's life. Such a claim does not guarantee the salvation of the child but rather follows the biblical tradition of God calling people to himself. The rite is derived from the theology as a continuance rite of circumcision under the Abrahamic covenant. In many Protestant traditions, the infant will reiterate the commitment by confirmation which is the initiation rite of the child to take responsibility and commitment in Christian life.²⁵

Statement of the Problem

It appears that the early Church did not administer baptism to infants. The quest for some believing parents who wished their innocent children to be set free from the stains of the original sin seemed to have led to the introduction of infant baptism into the Church.²⁶ The issue of infants' baptism has troubled Protestants for many centuries due to the divergent views of theologians as well as Bible scholars on the practice of this sacrament. The questions this study seeks to answer are thus:

1. What is the role of faith in connection with infant baptism?
2. What is the significant difference of the role of faith in infant baptism between Martin Luther and John Calvin?
3. Is this doctrine capable of inciting any revolution within Lutherans, or Calvinists?
4. What theological gap has this doctrine created among Christian theologians and scholars?

²⁵Walvoord, John F., and Zuck, Roy B., *Paedobaptism, The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Scripture Press, 1985), 72.

²⁶Joachim Jeremias, "Infant Baptism," *Oxford Journals: Journal of Theological Studies* 30 (1979): 37.

The Purpose of the Study

Many Christian denominations practice infant baptism. Almost all Orthodox churches and a few numbers of Protestants administer this sacrament. This study seeks to compare the candid views of Martin Luther and John Calvin on the role of faith in infant baptism. Luther and Calvin appear to be the significant architects of the Reformation. Both Luther and Calvin believe that infants are proper objects of baptism, but they seem to differ from the role of faith in infant baptism and the meaning of the sacrament.

Significance of the Study

Although scholars have written volumes of books and articles on their respective views on the issue, it seems that no one has done extensive work to compare the opinions on the role of faith in infant baptism of these two reformers. This study seeks to fill that gap. It will, probably, also lay the foundation to facilitate further research by enabling the future scholarly generation to build upon.

Moreover, the study will be relevant to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in relation to its position on infant baptism.

Delimitation

Paedobaptist theologians differ from the mode, time, when, how, and where to administer baptism to an infant.¹ This work will concentrate on the role of faith in administering baptism to infants in the theology of Martin Luther and John Calvin. This will help the researcher to delve into the origin, full meaning, and significance of this sacrament as a treatise by these two great reformers.

Methodology and Procedure

This work is a historical and comparative study. The researcher will make use of historical and comparative methods. Chapter one will deal with the introduction, definition of key terms of the topic, statement of the problem, purpose and significance of the study, delimitation, methodology and procedure.

Chapter two is a review of literature on the role of faith in infant baptism. The third chapter will talk of presentation and analysis of sources. Comparative analysis will also be employed in this chapter. Chapter four also will provide summary, conclusion, and implication to the study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter focuses on the related literature on the topic under review.

It deals with the conceptions of Church fathers, such as Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, and Augustine of Hippo on infant baptism. Further, writer will discuss the theologies of Modern scholars like Schleiermacher and Karl Barth. Finally, the researcher will discourse on the backgrounds of Luther and Calvin, and their respective theological presuppositions on the doctrine of infant baptism.

Church Fathers and the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

Tertullian

Scholars posit that Quintus Septimus Florens Tertullianus¹ AD 155-220.²

Tertullian is the first among the fathers who opposes the practice of infant baptism.³

He appears to accept the validity of infant baptism but argues that the practice is unnecessary and dangerous.⁴

¹Hans von Campenhausen, *The Fathers of the Church: Combined Edition of the Greek Church and The fathers of the Latin Church* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 1. The Church Fathers is the term used to describe the orthodox writers of the early Church. Scholars refer their writings to as patristic writing. Tertullian is the Anglicize name for Tertullianus.

²Brian H. Edwards, *Why 27?* (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press, 2007), 111. The writer attempts to take all dates of the Church fathers from this source.

³Paul Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship: A Basic Introduction to Ideas and Practice* (London: SPCK, 2010), 33.

⁴Ibid.

Booth argues that Tertullian recognizes the existence and prevalence of the practice and suggests to infants that could not survive the period of infancy only.

⁵Booth reiterates that Tertullian frowns on baptism for infants that could survive and the baptism of young people, widows and widowers.⁶ Bradshaw seems to concur Booth that the practice has been in place since the first century.⁷ A keen perusal of the thought of Bradshaw and Booth on Tertullian's theology of infant baptism seems to suggest that the father (Tertullian) did not entirely condemn the practice of infant baptism but cautions against its haphazard administration.

Nevertheless, Berkhof opines that infant baptism seems quite current in the days of Tertullian.⁸ He maintains that Tertullian disapproves the practice of infant baptism not only on the ground of the inexpediency of placing the young children under the heavy responsibility of the baptismal covenant, but also the inability of the child to openly express its faith.⁹ This suggests that Tertullian considers the candidate's own faith as a prerequisite of baptism. However, in the expositions of Paul Jewett, Warfield argues that Tertullian's opposition to infant baptism results from a fear that the baptized infant may commit sin after the ordinance.¹⁰ Leithart posits that Tertullian cautions, "If [people] understand the obligation of baptism, they will fear more receiving than delaying it."¹¹

⁵Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship: A Basic Introduction to Ideas and Practice*, 33.

⁶Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise: The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1995), 168.

⁷Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 33.

⁸Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 246.

⁹*Ibid.*, 248.

¹⁰Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism & the Covenant of Grace* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 21. See also B. B. Warfield, *The Polemics of Infant Baptism, in Studies in Theology*, 403.

Gregg concurs Warfield and suggests that Tertullian contends paedobaptism on the basis of the lack of infants to enroll as catechumens, and to publicly renounce the devil.¹² According to Gregg, Tertullian argues, “Why does innocent infancy rush to the forgiveness of sin? Let them know how to ‘ask’ for salvation, that you may seem at least to have given ‘to him who asks’.”¹³ Tertullian’s argument seems to suggest that no one should impose baptism that, to him, brings about the forgiveness of sin, on the infant. Rather, one should wait until the candidate requests for it.

Commenting on Tertullian’s argument on infant baptism, it appears that his fundamental point is apparent. It is better to wait until one is ready to live what he professes in baptism than to renounce that profession by living sinful life after baptism. In summary, Tertullian’s arguments against the practice of infant baptism are not only as a result of his fear of the child committing sin but also the infant’s inability to openly express its faith.

Cyprian

Scholars consider Cyprian (AD 210- 258) as the most venerable authority in the African tradition.¹⁴ According to Allison, Cyprian appears to maintain that baptism of infant is biblical. He argues in favor of infant baptism. However, he contends against the church’s tradition of baptizing infants on the eighth day of birth according to the Old Testament model of circumcision (Gen17:12). He posits for the

¹¹Peter J. Leithart, “Infant Baptism in History: An Unfinished Tragicomedy,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 247.

¹²Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011), 614.

¹³Ibid., 619.

¹⁴Eugene Teselle, *Augustine* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006), 47.

immediate baptism of the infant to wipe out the contamination of sin at birth.¹⁵

Leithart quotes Cyprian in respect of the case of infant baptism in the latter's address to Fidus, "no one ought to be hindered from baptism and from the grace of God . . . which, we think, is to be even more observed in respect of infants and newly-born persons . . . on the very beginning of their birth."¹⁶ Cyprian seems to articulate on behalf of the church fathers. Their counsel may not only encourage administering of baptism to infants who cannot confess their faith but also to unconverted adults.

In the matter of expressing one's faith as a condition of baptism, Cyprian suggests that the crying of the infants constitute their petition for baptism.¹⁷ On his assessment of faith, Bradshaw observe that the former deems faith as a sacrament instead of a virtue.¹⁸ He juxtaposes the opinions of Cyprian and Gregory of Nazianzus on the appropriate age to receive baptism and realizes that they differ in their views. Gregory argues that infants could receive baptism at about age three when they could not only answer baptismal questions themselves but also understand the Christian faith.¹⁹ However, Cyprian cites John 3:5 and 6:53, to argue that the expression of faith of a child in order to receive sacraments is not necessary.²⁰ Analysis of Cyprian's concept on the role of faith of infant baptism seems to reveal that as the circumcision in the Old Testament required no faith of the recipient, so does baptism to the infants.

¹⁵Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, 619.

¹⁶Leithart, "Infant Baptism in History: An Unfinished Tragicomedy," in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, 247, 248.

¹⁷Bradshaw, *Early Christian Worship*, 35.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid., 34.

²⁰David Rylaarsdam, "United, Separated, Re-united: The Story of Baptism and the Lord's Supper," *Calvin Theological Seminary Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2007): 4, 5.

Origen

Scholars appear to ascribe Origen (AD 180-253) as the greatest scholar in the early church.²¹ Bridge and Phypers posit that, Origen confesses that baptism to infants is a tradition he has received from the apostles.²² Buttressing Bridge and Phypers, Allison quotes Origen on the issue of infant baptism. According to Allison, Origen asserts “The church has received a tradition from the apostles to give baptism even to little children.”²³ Origen seems to concede the lack of explicit biblical support for the practice of infant baptism but indicates its origin from tradition. However, Berkhof appears to contend Origen about the apostolic origin of infant baptism and posits that the practice was current in the days of Origen and Tertullian.²⁴ This seems to indicate that Origen may refer to the apostolic fathers.

Origen appears to have in mind the doctrine of the original sin²⁵ that seems to argue for the necessity of infant baptism. In his attempt to contend the argument that infants do not need baptism since they have committed no personal sins, he asserts, “[N]o one is clean of filth even if that person is a day old, and since baptism removes this filth, it is expedient to baptize infants.”²⁶ Thus, Origen seems to argue for the practice of infant baptism because of the perception of the original sin. Critical

²¹ Donald Bridge and David Phypers, *The Water That Divides* (1998; repr., Ross-shire, Great Britain: Christian Focus, 2008), 32.

²²Ibid.

²³Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids, MI: 2011), 619.

²⁴Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (1937; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2002), 248.

²⁵Jaroslav Pelican, *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena* (London: Yale University Press, 1969), 79. According to Pelican, the doctrine of original sin seems not to be invention of Augustine but Cyprian. See also Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1999), 18.

²⁶Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine*, 619.

analysis of Origen's argument appears to reveal that, on like Cyprian who has a biblical support for infant baptism; Origen bases his argument on church tradition. Moreover, it appears that both Origen and Cyprian had a backdrop perception on the concept of original sin which Augustine later developed.

Augustine of Hippo

Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) seems to regard baptism of infants as “ex opere operato.”²⁷ Kelly posits Augustine insists on administering of baptism to infants by his doctrine of original sin.²⁸ In his discourse on Augustine's view on infant baptism, Berkhof asserts that Augustine maintains, all non-baptized infants who die are lost. However, his ideology on annihilation of all non-baptized children seems to fall short since not all baptized children who die at infancy will inherit eternal life. He seems to maintain that all unbaptized infants who would die are lost.²⁹ Berkhof posits that Augustine asserts that administering of baptism to the infant confers on it an indelible character of Christ, and the forgiveness of sin.³⁰ Augustine maintains that the baptized child is free from the stains of original sin, yet baptism does not wholly remove the corruptible nature of the child.³¹

²⁷Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 626.

²⁸J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrine* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1978), 363. Augustine maintains that the taint of the original sin is propagated from parent to child by the physical act of regeneration vis-à-vis through sexual intercourse even of baptized persons. See also Henri Blocher, *Original Sin: Illuminating the Riddle* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 1999), 18. Augustine formulates the doctrine on Genesis 3 and Romans 5. Calvin attempts to give a profound explanation to the doctrine of original sin as the hereditary depravation and corruption of human nature that diffuse into all parts of the soul, which makes all humankind liable to God's wrath. It also brings forth in human beings those works that Scripture calls “works of the flesh.”

²⁹Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 248.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 248.

He maintains that God imputes to the child the faith of both the godparent and the church at baptism. According to Battenhouse, Augustine maintains that the regenerating Spirit takes possession of either the godparent, or the parent, who presents the child and the infant itself and thus the subdued will of the parent becomes beneficial to the child because they both possess the same Spirit.³² Furthermore, Augustine suggests that the real parent of the child is but “the whole society of the saints,” “the whole mother Church.”³³ According to Burleigh, Augustine appears to posit that one who cannot express personal faith can benefit from the faith of others who can do so.³⁴

In summary, Augustine appears to accept the expression of faith as a prerequisite for baptism. However, since the child cannot express its own faith, God imputes the faith of the church on the child. His concept sounds more philosophical than biblical.

Modern Scholars and the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

Friedrich Schleiermacher

Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher (1768-1834) is a German theologian, philosopher, and biblical scholar.³⁵ Biblical scholars often refer to him as the Father

³²Roy W. Battenhouse, ed., *A Companion to the Study of St Augustine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 61.

³³Ibid. See also David Chidester, *Christianity: A Global History* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 2000), 65.

³⁴J. H. S. Burleigh, ed, *Augustine: Earlier Writing* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, n.d.), 211. See also Berkhof, *The History of Christian Church*, 248-248.

³⁵B. A. Gerrish, *A Prince of the Church: Schleiermacher and the Beginnings of Modern Theology* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 25.

of Modern Liberal Theology,³⁶ and the church father of the nineteenth century.³⁷ They also consider him as the most prominent Reformed theologian of his age.³⁸ Schleiermacher attempts to reconcile the criticisms of the Enlightenment with pietism. At the Moravian seminary, he abandons the study of the Old Testament and the oriental languages but acquaints himself with the techniques of historical criticism of the New Testament.³⁹

In his attempt to juxtapose infant baptism and its associated confirmation, Schleiermacher seems to opine that paedobaptism becomes complete only when the child receives confirmation. He appears to refer to the needed confirmation as a natural completion of paedobaptism.⁴⁰ This assertion of Schleiermacher seems to suggest that he considers infant baptism as a half done exercise. The above opinion seems to be the force that drives him to argue that without confirmation the practice of infant baptism subject itself to a sinful act since its recipient remains an unbeliever. He maintains that without confirmation, the practice of infant baptism subjects itself to a sinful act since its recipient remains an unbeliever.⁴¹ Schleiermacher's argument raises questions for further consideration. It appears that he could not determine the child's faith at baptism and also suggest the right time for the confirmation.

³⁶Friedrich Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, ed., Andrew Bowie (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 232.

³⁷David F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians: An Introduction to Christian Theology in the Twentieth Century*, 2nd ed. (1997; repr., Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2001), 24.

³⁸James M. Brandt, *All Things New: Reform of Church and Society in Schleiermacher's Christian Ethics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2011), 41.

³⁹Schleiermacher, *Hermeneutics and Criticism*, 232.

⁴⁰Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1976), 636.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, 633.

Howbeit, in his consideration of infant baptism from the sphere of the individual relationship to God, Schleiermacher contends that infants lack the requisite faith to receive baptism.⁴² According Makintosh and Stewart, Schleiermacher attempts to associate infant baptism with erroneous practice since its application makes the recipient a believer before the child develops full faith.⁴³ He seems to maintain that infant baptism, though valid, is “ineffectual.”⁴⁴ This is because the infant is not able to confess its faith in God. Moreover, this faith, he argues, results from one’s self-consciousness of God.⁴⁵ Schleiermacher’s argument seems to be in accordance with Jesus’ instruction in the Markan gospel which seems to connote the expression of faith before baptism (Mark 16:16).

By synthesizing his Pietistic and Rationalistic thoughts, Schleiermacher appears to oppose infant baptism on the account that infants lack reason and self-consciousness of God.⁴⁶ He maintains that this feeling of self-consciousness emanates from a realm outside human capability that depends on one’s conscious relationship with God. Schleiermacher seems to posit that faith develops from one’s close relationship with God, which the spirit of God seems to be the initiator. Therefore, He maintains that the church should comprise those whom Christ has decisively

⁴²Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, ed., H. R. Makintosh and J. S. Stewart (London: T. & T. Clark, 2006), 636.

⁴³Friedrich D. E. Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 636.

⁴⁴Friedrich Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 630. Schleiermacher explains valid baptism as one in which the formal correctness of its administration is followed, and ineffectual baptism as one that is prematurely administered before the work of teaching and preaching is complete, and has thus awakened faith in the recipient. That is, baptism becomes ineffectual if the church receives individuals into itself prior to the decisive determination of such ones.

⁴⁵Martin Redeker, *Schleiermacher: Life and Thought* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1976), 13.

⁴⁶Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 138.

determined their God-consciousness.⁴⁷ In his attempt to expatiate Schleiermacher's position on infant baptism, Riggs concurs Schleiermacher that infant baptism is ineffectual since the infants are destitute of God-consciousness, which the Spirit of Christ imparts.⁴⁸ The former also seem to assent with the latter by his assertion that infant baptism becomes ineffective since the child lacks fellowship with Christ that awakens faith in him/ her.⁴⁹

In his difficulty to determine when faith and self-consciousness mature, he admits that the inclinations of the church to baptize will sometimes either precede the inward workings of the Spirit's regeneration or lag behind them.⁵⁰ By this assertion, he appears to postulate the possibility of the church to baptize those who do not have faith, and unduly delay those who have developed faith.

He seems to be in dilemma to take a distinct position of the debate. Outwardly, he seems to succumb to the Reformed church's position that supports infant baptism whilst he inwardly rejects the practice because of the inability of the infant to confess its faith.⁵¹ He seems to be in exasperation, when concludes his position on infant baptism saying, "It would have been quite intelligible if ... infant baptism had been abolished at the Reformation."⁵² By this assertion, Schleiermacher seems to admit that infant baptism is unbiblical which the reformers ought to have mustered courage to

⁴⁷Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 138.

⁴⁸John W. Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: A Historical and Practical Theology* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 92.

⁴⁹John W. Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: A Historical and Practical Theology*, 92.

⁵⁰Schleiermacher, *The Christian Faith*, 623.

⁵¹Ibid., 637.

⁵²Ibid., 637. See also, Dale W. Brown, *Understanding Pietism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978), 20.

make it obsolete. By critical perusal of Schleiermacher's argument on the role of faith in infant baptism, it appears he disagrees with the paedobaptists for lack of the child to express its faith. Moreover, he seems to argue posit that the practice of infant baptism is unfounded in the scriptures and suggested its abandonment at the Reformation.

Karl Barth

A large number of scholars seem to regard Karl Barth (1886-1968) as a modern church father. They appear to rate his works with those of Augustine of Hippo, Thomas Aquinas, Friedrich Schleiermacher, and Albrecht Ritschl.⁵³ Writing on Barth's theological prowess, Jenkins asserts that some students of theology mention him in the same breath with Luther and Calvin.⁵⁴ According to Jenkins, Mackintosh declares Barth as "the greatest figure in Christian theology that has appeared for decades."⁵⁵ Mackintosh's assertion seems to suggest that Barth poses a deeper theological thought and his works are relevant in every epoch.

On his treatise on baptism, Barth seems to suggest that the rite is an act of obedience and conversion to God. He argues that baptism is for only the person that has received instruction in Christian faith and conduct. According to Bromiley, Barth regards baptism as an act of renunciation and committal that accepts the basic work of remission and renewal accomplished in Jesus Christ. Barth considers infant baptism as "an erratic block" that is missing in the baptismal teaching and practice of the

⁵³David L. Mueller, *Karl Barth*, ed., Bob E. Patterson (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1976), 13.

⁵⁴Daniel Jenkins, "Karl Barth," in *A Handbook of Christian Theologians*, ed., Martin E. Marty & Dean G. Peerman (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1984), 396.

⁵⁵Ibid.

apostles.⁵⁶ He appears to maintain that there is no New Testament passage that exegetically provides explicit evidence for infant baptism. He appears to concur the lack of any New Testament passage that provides unequivocal evidence for infant baptism.

Webster, Barth upholds baptism as human action and, therefore denies deeming it as a sacrament. According to Webster, Barth reiterates that sacrament do not connect Christians with God, however, it is significant to the community of faith.⁵⁷ He also seems to oppose the idea that baptism purifies and renews the recipient as proposed in the doctrine of original sin.⁵⁸ Although, sacrament may not link the community of faith to the deity, it seems that His presence at those occasions is undeniable.

In his treatise on vocation, Barth regards infant baptism as “the perverted ecclesiastical practice.” According to him, it makes one to become a Christian not only unwittingly but also and unwillingly.⁵⁹ Barth seems to be right in this assertion because administering baptism to a person who does not confess his personal faith in Christ seems to be a deviant from the scripture. He appears to concur Schleiermacher when he posits that one should become a Christian with consciousness.⁶⁰

⁵⁶Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *An Introduction to the Theology of Karl Barth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1979), 241, 242.

⁵⁷John Webster, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Karl Barth* (New York, NY: Cambridge University, 2000), 197.

⁵⁸Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, vol. 4-2, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, trans. G.W. Bromiley, ed., G.W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (1969; repr., Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 2000), 128.

⁵⁹Barth, vol. 4-3, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation* (1962; repr., Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 517.

⁶⁰Ibid.

Again, on his discourse on community evangelization, Barth seems to address the need to evangelize members baptized at infancy that he refers to as “non-Christen Christendom.”⁶¹ He argues that such members of the Christian community are people who become Christians before they become aware of what is at stake. He contends that since such members have not made any resolve or expressed any desire to be Christians, they become aliens to the Gospel.⁶² Further, he argues, the act of baptism is an act of obedience and hope, which the community or its representatives cannot take proxy.⁶³

Moreover, he infers that the doctrine of infant baptism emerged from the time of the Reformation when the Anabaptists exerted pressure on its traditional. He argues extensively that since there had been no candid doctrine on the issue before the support. He argue extensively that since there had been no candid doctrine on the issue before the Reformation, then the apostles did not practice infant baptism.⁶⁴ He seems to be emotional while commenting on the inception of the doctrine of infant baptism. He submits, “The result is that theology today is confronted by the brute fact of baptismal practice which has become the rule in all the churches.”⁶⁵ Barth seems to exaggerate in this assertion because not all Christian denominations practice infant baptism. Nonetheless, he seems to concur Schleiermacher’s argument that the doctrine of infant baptism should have become abolished in the era of the Reformation.

⁶¹Barth, vol. 4-3, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 872.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Ibid., 166.

⁶⁴Ibid., 167.

⁶⁵Barth, vol. 4-3, *The Doctrine of Reconciliation*, 165.

In summary, Barth seems to oppose the practice of infant baptism on the grounds that it lacks the apostolic support, and also imposes discipleship on the infants without their concern.

Martin Luther

Biography of Martin Luther

Martin Luther was born on November 10, 1483 in Eisleben, Germany. His father was of free peasant stock but later he became a copper miner. From infancy, Luther received a strict discipline from his mother who also inculcated in him many superstitions that appeared to haunt him to struggle for salvation. Cairns suggest that Luther's mother instilled in him from his childhood, his love of hard work, his strong will, and his practical conservatism.⁶⁶

Luther was a brilliant student. His father had wanted him to become a lawyer. However, it appeared that his promise to St Anne to deliver him from a boisterous thunderstorm led him to enter monastery. He became an Augustinian monk, and finally graduated as a Catholic priest of Augustinian order. His study of philosophy in the University of Erfurt had made him aware of the need of divine intervention for salvation.⁶⁷

Luther earned both of his bachelor and master's degrees in arts from the University of Erfurt in 1502 and 1505 respectively. He taught theology in the University Wittenburg, where he also obtained his doctorate degree in the discipline.

Luther's turn-around to become a reformist stemmed from a passage he read from Romans 1:17, "*The just shall live by faith*" (NKJV, italics mine). Recognizing

⁶⁶Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 282.

⁶⁷Ibid., 283.

this truth, Luther started scrutinizing the Roman Catholics teaching of salvation by meritorious works and he began to speak and make public protest against the sale of Indulgences.⁶⁸

On October 31, 1517, Luther posted his famous Ninety Five Theses, by which he condemned the sale of indulgence, on the door of the University's All Saints Church in Wittenberg, Germany. He challenged all the parishioners to debate on the issues. From 1517-1521, Luther faced about six fierce debates⁶⁹ with men whom the pontiff appointed to convict him and make his writings fallible.

Hunt considers Luther as a theologian, a scholar, a song writer, a composer, and a reformist.⁷⁰ Between 1519-1521, he authored three books; *The Address to the German Nobility*; *Babylonian Captivity*; and, *The Freedom of the Christian Mind*. These publications appear to attack the hierarchy, the sacraments, and the theology of the Roman Catholic Church respectively.⁷¹ Beside these, Luther also publishes books and articles that appear to give immense contribution to the Reformation.⁷²

Luther's theology seems to be founded on faith by his discovering of the saving faith in Romans 1:17. It appears that his newfound light becomes his focus and he then abandons the rites, and the acts of asceticism that he has hoped for as the means of salvation. Now Luther seems to shift his theological thought from mysticism

⁶⁸Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 284.

⁶⁹Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 284. In 1517, Tetzel; 1518, his colleagues in Augustinian order at Heidelberg; 1518, Diet of Augsburg with Cardinal Cajetan; 1519 (July), John Eck at Leipzig; 1520 (June), The Bull Exsurge Domine, which led to his excommunication from Pope Leo X; 1521, Charles V at Worms.

⁷⁰Hunt, 316.

⁷¹Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 284.

⁷²Ibid. Other publications of Luther included; *German Theology* (1516), *The Bondage of the Will* (1524), *Admonition to Peace* (1525), *Against the Plundering and Murderous Hordes*, *Short Catechism* (1529), and *The Large Catechism*.

to faith and develops a theological system on justification by faith (*sola fide*), the authority of the Scriptures only as a rule of faith (*sola scriptura*), and the priesthood of all believers (*sola sacerdos*).⁷³

Martin Luther's Theology on the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

Luther appears to occupy himself in greater detail with baptism and proper understanding of it right from the beginning of his dispute with Rome. According to Lohse, Luther's controversy with the church over indulgences and penance appears to furnish him the impetus for composing sermons on the sacraments of which the treatise on infant baptism seems to be his first treatment.⁷⁴ However, Garrette's treatise on the paedobaptists' defense for infant baptism reveals that Luther builds his theology of infant baptism on his belief on the doctrine of original sin.

In his debate against the Anabaptists, Luther appears to insist that baptism does not follow the faith of the recipient but from the divine institution and disposition. He maintains that what justifies the recipient is not baptism, but faith in the promises of God. He holds that the faith of parents and godfathers assist the infants, and as they grow, their own faith will emerge and develop. Hence, Luther seems to posit that the infant's rudimentary faith originates from two sources: the sponsors and the child's itself. Lohse opines that Luther's assertion seems to digress from the traditional baptismal theology.⁷⁵

⁷³Cairn, 282.

⁷⁴Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, ed. and trans. Roy A. Harrisville (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2011), 299.

⁷⁵Ibid. 304.

According to Lull, Luther seems to expound that faith is intangible and that no one can ascertain the faith in the heart of the recipient. He argues, “Whoever bases baptism on the faith of the one to be baptized can never baptize anyone.”⁷⁶ The above statement suggests that those who propose that children cannot express their faith and therefore, cannot receive baptism may contribute to the dwindling and extinction of the church. On his discourse on the gospel commission, Luther seems to posit that the command does not discriminate against children. He argues that children constitute a great part of the heathen, whom the Lord would want His disciples to go and baptize,⁷⁷ and it is therefore scriptural to baptize them.⁷⁸

Disputing with the Anabaptists on rebaptism, Luther seems to maintain that faith does not exist for the sake of baptism but vice versa. He argues that faith comes and makes baptism complete.⁷⁹ Lull posits that Luther concerns himself with the method of baptism instead of the subject.⁸⁰ This seems to suggest that Luther seems no flaw in the practice of infant baptism. In his analysis on Luther’s sermons, Linker observes that Luther attempts to maintain that infants receive baptism not by their own faith, but by the faith of their believing sponsors and godparents who bring them for baptism. He attempts to refer this mode as the power of “alien faith,” (*fides aliena*).⁸¹ He argues that alien faith does not save someone else, but that through it the child obtains its own faith that is able to save it. Bridge and Phipers,

⁷⁶Timothy F. Lull, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1989), 353.

⁷⁷Luther, *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, 248.

⁷⁸Lull, 354.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, 258.

⁸⁰*Ibid.*

⁸¹John Nicholas Linker, ed, *Sermons of Martin Luther* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1994), 79.

concur Linker and maintain that Luther propounds that the child's faith is a gift from God, which no one can discern its bestowal on the infant.⁸² They posit that Luther maintains that baptism strengthens the embedded faith in the infant, and as the child grows it drowns the sinful nature within it daily by the renewal of its baptismal vow.⁸³

In his treatise on Luther's sermons, Hazlitt realizes that Luther contends with the Anabaptists who oppose baptism to infants with argument that the infants are destitute of reasoning. Luther argues that reasoning is the dire adversary of faith. He insists that reason never come to the aid of spiritual things, but it struggles against the Divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God.⁸⁴ He appears to argue that if God can endow the grown persons with Holy Ghost, a fortiori, He can bestow the Spirit to young children. Thus he maintains, "Faith comes from the Word of God, when this is heard; little children hear that Word when they receive baptism, and therewith receive also faith."⁸⁵

Again, Luther contends with the Anabaptists on the latter's position that infants lack knowledge of their environment at baptism and thus their faith is not involved. According to Berkhof, Luther does not regard the baptismal water as mere water, but that which has become a gracious water of life by virtue of the Word with its inherent divine power. He seems to suggest that the presence of this divine power in the water, which he terms as, "God's prevenient grace," works faith in the unconscious child.⁸⁶

⁸²Bridge and Phypers, *The Water That Divides*, 105.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁸⁴William Hazlitt, "Table Talk of Martin Luther," accessed 14 February 2016, http://www.ccel.org/ccle/luther/table_talk.html.

⁸⁵*Ibid.*

⁸⁶Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (1941; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1991), 627.

Trigg's work on Luther's theology appears to reveal that Luther regards this faith not as one that a man possesses but that which God endows. He attempts to describe this faith as *unselfconsciousness*.⁸⁷ According to Lehmann and Bergendorff, Luther rejects the belief that the church's faith becomes the surety for the infant. He seems to maintain that Christ himself is the baptizer. Thus, at the baptismal font, Christ speaks and baptizes; therefore His word and act of baptism invoke the Spirit and faith in the child.⁸⁸

Luther appears to treatise that Christ's presence hovers on the baptismal water. Thus, Christ imputes his epiphany to the recipients of the sacrament as faith. According to Gunton, Luther maintains that the baptismal water infuses with faith, and the infant appropriates it.⁸⁹

In his attempt to juxtapose faith and sacrament, Luther appears to enjoin them as a complete whole. He suggests that faith does not create sacrament nor validate it, neither the sacrament is of any benefit in the absence faith. According to Trigg, Luther maintains, "baptism is not the work which one does but a treasure which God gives and faith grasps it."⁹⁰ However, considering Luther's definition of faith as a gift of God to the unconscious child, the above quotation seems to mean that, for Luther, both the needed faith of the infant and the act of its baptism are divine endowments. Luther appears to linking baptism to circumcision that did not require the expression

⁸⁷Jonathan Trigg, "Luther on Baptism and Penance," in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, ed., Robert Kolb, Irene Dingel and Lubomir Batka (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 314.

⁸⁸Martin Luther, "Concerning Rebaptism: A Letter of Martin Luther to Two Pastors," in *Luther's Work and Ministry*, ed., Helmut T. Lehmann and Conrad Bergendorff (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1958), 242.

⁸⁹Collin E. Gunton, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Doctrine* (United Kingdom: Cambridge, 1999), 211.

⁹⁰Trigg, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 311.

of faith from the recipient infant. He attempts to posit that infants receive baptism not because the church is certain of their faith but because it is the command and the will of God. He maintains, “For if I were never certain of any more faith, I still am certain of the command of God that God has bidden to baptize.”⁹¹ This assertion suggests that Luther is more concerned on the practice of baptism than its prerequisites.

Moreover, Luther draws a direct analogy between circumcision and baptism as a sign of a covenant relationship with God. He opines that just as circumcision was the sign of the old covenant, baptism is the sign of the new covenant. And the latter replaces the former for both Jews and Gentiles who believe in Jesus. Trigg, commenting on Luther’s lectures on Genesis, notes that Luther speaks of the two covenants as one even though the signs have changed.

Biography of John Calvin

John Calvin is French theologian but a Swiss Reformer.⁹² He is the father of Calvinism and arguably one of the two significant originators of the Protestant Reformation. He was born at Noyon, France, on 10 July 1509 and died on 27 May 1564. His parents were Gerald Cauvin and Jeanne la France.⁹³

At the age of fourteen, his father sent him to the University of Paris in order to study theology.⁹⁴ His father, an employee of the bishop of Noyon, had wanted him to

⁹¹Martin Luther, “Concerning Rebaptism (1528): A Letter of Martin Luther to Two Pastors, in *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed., Timothy F. Lull and William R. Russell (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2005), 253.

⁹²Hunt, *Concise Church History*, 328.

⁹³Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Encyclopedia of Christian Theology*, vol. 1 A-F (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), 241. McNeill calls Calvin’s mother, Jeanne Lefranc.

⁹⁴John Piper, “The Divine Majesty of the Word: John Calvin: The Man and his Preaching,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* SBJT 03: 2 (Summer 1999): 4, accessed 14 February 2016, <https://www.galaxie.com/article/sbjt03-2-02/print>.

become a Catholic priest but the former changed his mind after his conflict with the bishop. Calvin attended a law school at Orleans and received training to become a humanist lawyer under the auspices of his lecturer, Andrea Alciati.⁹⁵ While studying law, Calvin gained a mastery of the Greek language.⁹⁶ Shortly after Calvin completed the law course, Gérard died in May of 1531. This event seems to have provided the freedom for Calvin to turn from law to his first love, the classics. He returned to Paris both after his graduation, and after the death of his father in 1531.

According to George, Calvin describes his conversion from Catholicism to evangelicalism as a “sudden conversion,” (*conversione subita*).⁹⁷ Scholars have not been able to recognize the specific time of Calvin’s conversion. However, they arguably suggest that it occurred around late 1529 and early 1530.⁹⁸ Calvin confesses that his conversion was a struggle.⁹⁹ He seems to admit that at first, he “strenuously and passionately” resisted. He was reluctant to accept evangelicalism because his novelty offended him. He appears to confess, “It was with the greatest difficulty that I was induced to confess that I had all my life long been in ignorance and error.”¹⁰⁰ George suggests that Calvin’s cousin, Robert Olivertan is the architect behind the Reformer’s conversion.¹⁰¹ However, Parker, in his in-depth study on Calvin’s

⁹⁵Hunt, 328.

⁹⁶Piper, “The Divine Majesty of the Word: John Calvin: The Man and his Preaching,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* SBJT 03: 2 (Summer 1999): 4

⁹⁷Timothy George, “Glory unto God: John Calvin,” in *Theology of the Reformers* (Nashville, TN: Broadman, 1988), 171.

⁹⁸Parker, T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin: A Biography* (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 13 22.

⁹⁹George, *Theology of the Reformers*, 172.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

¹⁰¹Ibid.

conversion argues that the latter's sudden conversion is not denominationally affiliated, rather from his study of law to the study of theology.¹⁰² Parker's argument seems to be more accurate because Calvin was at first working hard for his barrister career until God unexpectedly redirected his course by his own providence to become a pastor.

In Paris, Calvin became friend to Nicholas Cop, the rector of the University of Paris whose speech, in a convocation address on All Saints Day in 1533, seemed to spark the explosion of the anti-Protestant feelings that appeared to force them to flee from Paris. Douglas and Cairns suggest that the masses implicated Calvin of Cop's speech.¹⁰³ According to them, Calvin wandered for three years and finally settled at Strasbourg¹⁰⁴ as solitude for his scholarly life.¹⁰⁵ The religious tension that seemed to provoke violence revolt against the Protestants in France, later on, also forced Calvin to flee to Basel, Switzerland via Geneva.

Geneva had been nominally Protestant city for about a decade.¹⁰⁶ At Geneva, a Protestant leader, Guillaume Farel found him and threatened him with a curse if he would refuse to assist him to complete the work of the Protestant reformation. Calvin reluctantly complied.¹⁰⁷ He became a shepherd of the French refugee congregation.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰²Parker, "Calvin's conversion, Appendix 2" in *John Calvin* (1975; repr., England: Lion Publishing, 1982), 192-196.

¹⁰³J. D. Douglas and Earle E. Cairns, ed., "John Calvin" *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 1: 177.

¹⁰⁴*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵James I. Packer, "John Calvin and Reformed Europe," in *Great Leaders of the Christian Church*, ed. John D. Woodbridge (Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1988) 211.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷Cairns, *Christianity through the Centuries*, 304.

¹⁰⁸Douglas and Cairns, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 178.

Their work at Geneva also rose up some opponents. Subsequently, Calvin fled back to Strasbourg. At Strasbourg, his work on the commentary of the Romans, and as a representative of the city in colloquies with Lutherans, and Catholics at Worms and Regensburg, gradually spread his fame as a biblical scholar and theologian.

He short-lives Strasbourg and goes back to Geneva, upon invitation, to encounter Cardinal Sadoletto who attempts to bring Geneva back under Roman control.¹⁰⁹ On his return to Geneva, Calvin attempts to revise the city's laws to curb the impending moral decadence. He also establishes an academy that trains missionaries, which would become a University. His rigorous work of reformation in Geneva spearheads internal conflict. Finally, his opponents vilify him for his part in the Inquisitions condemnation and execution by stake of Michael Servetus, a Spaniard anti- Trinitarian heretic.¹¹⁰ Stauffer argues that pastoral work consumes Calvin's life after his abrupt conversion to the Lord, except for his attempt to be a reclusive scholar, which he soon aborted.¹¹¹

Calvin seems to be a scholar and a theologian. He published his maiden work, a commentary on Seneca's *De Clementia* in 1532. In 1534 he also published his first religious work, *Psychopannychia* that attempts to contend the Anabaptists doctrine of soul sleep.¹¹² He started publishing his famous work, *The Institute of Christian Religion* in 1536, in Basel. Calvin also authors commentaries on twenty-three books of the Old Testament, and on all the New Testament books with the exception of the

¹⁰⁹Douglas and Cairns, *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church*, 178.

¹¹⁰*Ibid.*, 179.

¹¹¹Richard Stauffer, *The Humanness of John Calvin*, trans. George Shriver (Nashville: Abingdon, 1971), 72-93. See also Ronald S. Wallace, *Calvin, Geneva and the Reformation: A Study of Calvin as Social Worker, Churchman, Pastor and Theologian* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1988), 131-218; W. Robert Godfrey, *John Calvin: Pilgrim and Pastor* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2009), 58-192.

¹¹²Samuel Dunn, *The Best of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981), 4.

second and third epistles of John, and the Apocalypse.¹¹³ Dunn suggests that the whole of Calvin's works amount to about fourteen folia volumes, and there are more volumes of his work which scholars are yet to translate into English.¹¹⁴

John Calvin's Theology on the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

John Calvin, in the initial years of the Protestant reformation, appears to posit that the expression of faith is a prerequisite of the recipient of a sacrament. He seems to contend the practice of baptizing the children of Christians at their infancy with the reason that they seem incapable of receiving instructions in anything, neither do they able to give outward testimony to their received inward faith.¹¹⁵

Later, Calvin appears to regard the rite of infant baptism, together with other sacraments, as act of confessing one's belief, but only secondarily.¹¹⁶ He appears to maintain that grace emanates from God as its source and that all sacraments are merely the instruments for the distribution of the eminent grace. In his treatise on Calvin's theology on infant baptism, Cunningham quotes Calvin, "that baptism in general is the outward sign and seal of the blessings of divine grace, without a previous profession of faith."¹¹⁷ Calvin's assertion seems to suggest that he does not regard faith as a prerequisite for baptism; rather baptism becomes a way of appreciating the endowed saving grace from God.

¹¹³Dunn, *The Best of John Calvin*, 4.

¹¹⁴Dunn, *The Best of John Calvin*, 4, 5.

¹¹⁵John Calvin, *Institute of Christian Religion: 1536 Edition*, ed., and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 101.

¹¹⁶Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines*, 246.

¹¹⁷Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, 152.

Calvin appears to observe a closer link between faith and salvation than faith and the sacraments, which baptism is an aspect. He postulates that it is certain that infants receive the blessings by the eminent grace of God that baptism signifies and represents.¹¹⁸ He appears to posit the Holy Spirit imbues faith in the child at baptism.¹¹⁹ On his treatise Jesus' blessing of children, Calvin argues that Jesus' assertion to let children come unto him opens the broad way for the rite of infant baptism.¹²⁰ Moreover, in his argument concerning the faith of the child, Calvin appears to treatise that faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit that the child receives as a gift. This received gift quickens the child and the unbelief to receive Christ by faith.¹²¹

According to Parker, Calvin advocates for infant baptism whether the church or the godparents testify their faith or not. He appears to maintain, "Christ himself is the real subject of baptism."¹²² In his work to expatiate Calvin's theology, Niesel opines that Calvin's assertion above suggests that the latter intends to mean that Christ imputes His righteousness on the infant at baptism. Thus, Christ becomes the ultimate aim and the end of baptism.¹²³ According to Battles, Calvin maintains that no one can know the status of faith of the infant until all the promises inherent in an infant's baptism become discernible when the child grows up in the faith.¹²⁴

¹¹⁸Berkhof, 246.

¹¹⁹John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin Institute of Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 2: 1330.

¹²⁰John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin Institute of Christian Religion*, 2: 1330.

¹²¹*Ibid.*

¹²²T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (England: Lion Publishing, 1982), 45.

¹²³Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of John Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1980), 220.

Spierling posits that Calvin accepts Augustine's doctrine of original sin and guilt, which necessitates infant baptism. However, he seems to reject the salvific notion on the practice and contends with emergency baptism. Calvin frowns at the practice of midwives baptizing infants for fear of immediate death.¹²⁵

McNeill posits that Calvin appears to defend paedobaptism as both doctrinal and traditional. He seems to suggest two rationales for the practice as wiping out of original sin, and a sign of regeneration.¹²⁶ According to McNeill, Calvin seems to juxtapose circumcision and baptism and suggests both rites draw the same spiritual significance, and do not differ in the inner mystery but their only dissimilarity lies in the externals.¹²⁷ Calvin's assertion suggests that he subscribes to the covenant idea, which requires no expressed faith on the part of its recipient on infant baptism.

Battle, in his work, *Analysis of the Institutes of the Christian Religion of John Calvin*, concurs McNeill of Calvin's defense that God approves infant baptism. He posits that the right of sacramental sign rests not so much on external rites. Calvin seems to recognize an analogical relationship between baptism and circumcise "as set forth in Scripture."¹²⁸ He appears to insist that circumcision and baptism have the same promise but differ in externals only. Again, he seems to posit that the scripture endorses infant baptism as what circumcision did for the ancient Jews.¹²⁹

¹²⁴John Calvin, *Institute of Christian Religion: 1536 Edition*, ed., and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 101.

¹²⁵Karen E. Spierling, *Infant Baptism in Reformation Geneva: The Shaping of a Community; 1536-1564* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2005), 220.

¹²⁶John T. McNeill, ed., *Calvin: Institutes of Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, nd), 2: 1326.

¹²⁷*Ibid.*, 2:1327.

¹²⁸ Ford Lewis Battles, *Analysis of the Institutes of Christian Religion of John Calvin* (1980), repr., Phillipsburg, NJ: P& R Publishing, 2011), 365.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, 367.

Parker, writing on Calvin's doctrines, agrees with Battles and McNeill on Calvin's thought of the role of faith infant baptism, Parker seems to suggest that Calvin holds unto the experiences of Abraham and Isaac in circumcision as the basis for infant for the covenant children. According to Parker, Calvin postulates, "in Abraham's case, the sacrament follows faith ... in Isaac's case the sacrament precedes faith." It seems that Calvin intends to maintain that as Isaac received circumcision because he was an heir by the covenant, so it behooves the children of believers to receive baptism.

Battles, in analyzing Calvin's work, concurs with Parker on Calvin's understanding of a child's faith at baptism. Objecting to the opinion that infants are not capable of repentance and faith to receive baptism, Calvin challenges, "why did God command circumcision of infants, which scripture also calls a sign of repentance, which Paul calls the seed of righteousness of faith?" Calvin seems to posit that baptism of infants result to their future repentance and faith, "and even though these have not yet been formed in them" and their seed lies concealed within them through the stealthy working of the Holy Spirit. Calvin's assertion seems to support his doctrine the prevenient grace.

In summary, Calvin's theology on the role of faith in infant baptism seems to hinge on the doctrine of original sin. He rates any rites of sacrament as secondary to the bestowal of God's eminent grace. He links the rites of circumcision and baptism as one in their spiritual importance, though they differ in their outward executions. He seems to maintain that faith is not necessarily a prerequisite for baptism, and therefore, infant baptism is scriptural.

CHAPTER 3

ANALYSIS OF THE ISSUE

Chapter three is the zenith of this work. In this chapter the writer will attempt to analyze the respective theologies of Martin Luther and John Calvin on the subject under review. In the same vein, the writer will compare the theologies of Luther and Calvin to ascertain where they converge and diverge concerning the subject matter. Further, the writer will not only employ biblical passages but also attempt to peep into church traditions and patristic writings that seem to augment the sub-topic. The writer will consider a few arguments from scholars that seem to be relevant in an attempt to unfold the biblical background of the topic. Finally, the writer will delve into biblical passages to accentuate the theological meaning on the role of faith in infant baptism.

Analysis on Martin Luther's view on the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

The bedrock of Martin Luther's theology appears to be faith. Writing to his friend Nicholas, on communion that is permissible to those who have received baptism, Luther warns that in the days ahead only those who can answer on their personal faith could partake.¹ By this assertion, Luther seems to suggest that those who cannot expressly affirm their faith, like infants, are not legible to partake the sacraments.

¹Bridge and Phypers, *The Water That Divides*, 97.

However, it appears that after his debate with the Anabaptists on the faith of the child in infant baptism he seems to rely on the common Christian tradition.² This seems to suggest that Luther fails to have biblical support for the practice of infant baptism, other than tradition. For Luther to compromise his theology with tradition, then he appears to fault the battle cry of the Reformation, “faith alone.”

Luther’s theology on the sacraments that seems to lay emphasis on the prominence of their divine institution rather than the faith of their recipients seems to be serious. This idea seems to propel him to insist that baptism does not follow the faith of the recipient but from the divine institution and disposition. And thus, what justifies the recipient is not baptism, but faith in the promises of God. Luther seems to overtly capitalize on faith at the expense of obedience to the command of the Deity. His assertion seems to replay the devil’s advocacy: For the devil has faith in God but does not take Him at His word (Jas 2:19).

Luther’s position that faith is imperceptible and unascertainable in the heart seems to be correct because nobody can discern the heart of mankind, save the Spirit of God (1 Sam 16:7). He seems to anchor his argument on this issue and assumes that the infants might possess faith in their heart that qualifies them to receive baptism. However, the Scripture maintains, with a few examples, that the recipient of baptism either confess their sins, express their desire for baptism, or confess their faith in the Lord (Mark 16:16; Matt 3:5, 6; Acts 2:37, 38; 16; 31, 32). The above argument seems to weaken Luther’s assertion that “Whoever bases baptism on the faith of the one to be baptized can never baptize anyone.”

²Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality*, 164. Luther recognizes that the argument from tradition is valid if the institution under discussion is not contrary to Scripture.

Luther's theology of the alien faith needs consideration. He appears to posit that infants receive baptism by virtue of their godparents' faith, which serves as a springboard for the development of their faith. It seems feasible that the faith of the godparents can motivate their godchildren; however, it appears unrealistic that the former's faith can serve as a foundation for the latter's faith. However, he appears to have distanced himself from the traditional view, which upholds that the vicarious faith of the godparents or of the churches becomes substitute for that of the infants.

Luther's argument on the infant's faith at the time of baptism needs examination. He propounds that the word of God infuses faith into the child, as a gift, at the time of its baptism, which no one can recognize except God Himself.³ However, he appears to contradict this argument when he concludes that the child's faith will emerge and develop as the infant grows.⁴ These assertions raise questions at their perusal: What will mark the actual time of the emergence of the child's faith? Again, at the emergence of the faith of the child, what would happen to the received faith from God? Luther's silence on these questions presumes that he realizes his contradictions and opts to remain quiet. On the other note, Luther seems to hesitate the bestowal of the gift of faith.⁵

In a similar instance Luther appears to treatise that the baptismal water is not mere water, but that which has turned to a gracious water of life by virtue of the Word with its innate divine power. He maintains that Christ's presence hovers on the baptismal water. Luther might have borrowed this theology from his theology of con-substantiation. He seems to attach Spiritism and mysticism to the ordinary rite of

³Bridge and Phypers, *The Water That Divides*, 105. See also Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, 304.

⁴Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, 304.

⁵Ibid.

Christian initiation that symbolizes the recipient's death to sin, burial in sin, and resurrection into new life (Rom 6:3, 4). Luther's concept of spiritualized water for baptism seems unbiblical.

Luther's teaching that maintains that Christ officiates the baptism of infant needs examination. He argues that at the baptismal font Christ speaks and baptizes, and His word and act of baptism invoke the Spirit and faith in the child.⁶ The kind of baptism Luther refers to seems vague. This is because, in the light of the New Testament, the responsibility to administer water baptism appears to rest upon humankind (Matt 3:1, 5, 6; Mark 1:4; John 1:26; Acts 8:38; 1 Cor 1:16). It is noteworthy that Jesus himself did not baptize but His disciples (John 4:2).

Luther's argument that baptism supersedes any prerequisite of its recipient because it is a command of God needs consideration. In the New Testament it appears that the preaching or the study of the Word, the recipient confession and affirmation of faith in Jesus as the Christ seem to be the requirement of the baptismal candidate (Matt 3:5, 6; Acts 2:37-39; 8:12, 13; 16:30-33).⁷ Luther's assertion, therefore, seems to have no biblical support.

In his contention with the Anabaptists who dispute infant baptism with argument that the infants lack reason to make conscious decision, Luther argues that reason is the dreadful adversary of faith that struggles against the Divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God.⁸ Luther's assertion seems to be correct, though partially: Because with human reasoning, no one can comprehend

⁶Martin Luther, "Concerning Rebaptism: A Letter of Martin Luther to Two Pastors," in *Luther's Work and Ministry*, ed., Helmut T. Lehmann and Conrad Bergendorff (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1958), 242. See also Trigg, *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, 311.

⁷Helbert Kiesler, "The Ordinances: Baptism, Foot Washing, and Lord's Supper, in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 587.

⁸William Hazlitt, "Table Talk of Martin Luther," accessed 14 February 2016, http://www.ccel.org/ccle/luther/table_talk.html.

God (1 Cor 1:21), and without reasoning no one can worship God aright (Rom 12:2, NKJV).

Luther's consideration of baptism as a replacement of circumcision calls for analysis. Though they have similarities as initiation rites; circumcision into Judaism, and baptism into Christianity, the latter does not replace the former, just as Christianity does not replace Judaism.⁹ It appears that circumcision did not require the expression of faith from the recipient infants; however, baptism requires the candidates' expression of faith in Christ after they have received the gospel.

Analysis on John Calvin's View on the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

The fulcrum of John Calvin's theology on infant baptism seems to spin on grace. In the same vein, he seems to maintain that the only rule and the legal ground by which the church may administer baptism, is the covenant.¹⁰ Calvin's teachings that appear to reject the expression of faith, on the part of the baptismal candidate, as a primary function in receiving baptism,¹¹ need examination. However, it appears that at the early years of the Reformation, he objected the practice of infant baptism because of the incapability of the infants to receive instructions.

Calvin's refusal to accept the expression of faith prior to baptism seems to stem from his perception that sacraments are merely means to access divine grace. However, God does not seem to consider any of His ordinances as a common thing. The New Testament seems to give ample evidences of expression of faith before

⁹Victor Figueroa, class notes for THST 632 Doctrine of the Church, Adventist University of Africa, Nairobi, Kenya, August 2016.

¹⁰John Calvin, *Institute of Christian Religion: 1536 Edition*, ed., and trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 640.

¹¹Cunningham, *Historical Theology*, 152.

receiving baptism (Matt 3:5, 6; Acts 2:37-39; 8:12, 13; 16:30-33). Calvin should not have overlook this and taught as such.

Calvin's view that appears to regard closer link between faith and salvation than faith and sacrament needs a perusal. Although sacraments are not means to earn salvation,¹² they appear to be ways to by which their adherent express their faith in Christ, and also profess His lordship (cf Acts 8:37, 37, NKJV). Had Calvin considered this fact, he would have maintained his earliest position that seems to contest the practice of infant baptism due to the infants' inability to express their faith.

Calvin seems to maintain that Jesus' invitation to let children come unto him paves a way for the rite of infant baptism (Mark 10:13-16). However, by critical analysis of the text, it appears that there is no hint of baptism. Jesus only blesses them and declares that they have access in the kingdom of God.

Calvin appears to maintain in his theology that the Holy Spirit imbues faith in the infant at baptism. This assertion of Calvin is debatable. The Scripture appears to reveal that faith comes as a result of hearing the word of God (Rom 10:17). But since the unintelligible infant cannot hear the gospel, let alone to fathom the message, it is impossible for him to possess such saving faith.

Another facet of Calvin's theology on the practice of infant baptism that needs examination is his assertion that "Christ himself is the real subject of baptism."¹³ He seems to propound this to contend the practice of traditional faith. It appears that Christ cannot be the real subject of baptism. This argument of Calvin seems to confound his argument that the Holy Spirit infuses faith into the child at baptism.

¹²Kiesler, *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, 591.

¹³T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin* (England: Lion Publishing, 1982), 45.

Calvin draws analogy between circumcision and baptism in his theology on the role of faith in infant baptism. By employing covenantal idea, he seems to conclude that baptism does not require the expression of faith from the recipient just as the circumcision did not. However, it appears that Christianity is the continuation of God's everlasting covenanted people from the Old Testament (1 Pet 2:9 cf Exod 19:6), yet, the requirements of their recipients appear to differ; circumcision required no expression of faith from its recipient, but the prerequisites to receive baptism include hearing of the gospel, confession of sin and profession of Jesus as the Christ and Lord.

A Comparative study of Luther's and Calvin Theology on the Role of Faith in Infant Baptism

Martin Luther and John Calvin seem to share some convictions similar in their theologies on the role of faith in infant baptism. On the other hand, they appear to be at variance on some aspects in their theological thoughts concerning the topic under review. In this section of the work, the writer will attempt to compare their similarities and then contrast their differences.

Luther and Calvin share the conviction that the sacraments are signs and seals that are incorporation with the Word of God. They also concur that the sacraments communicate no kind of grace that the Word does not impart, and they have no value apart from the Word. Moreover, they seem to treatise on the sacramental soteriology that appears to supports the sacramental argument for infant baptism.

Again it appears that although Luther and Calvin severely criticize the Roman Catholic Church over many points on doctrine and practice, they view infant baptism as authentic biblical practice.

Further they seem to conclude that circumcision and baptism draw the same spiritual significance, and do not differ in the inner mystery but their only dissimilarity lies in the externals, which requires no expression of faith on the part of its recipient. They appear to maintain that Scripture endorses infant baptism.

They recognize an analogical relationship between baptism and circumcision as set forth in Scripture. On their treatise of Jesus' blessing of children, both Luther and Calvin argue that Jesus' assertion to let children come unto Him opens the broad way for the rite of infant baptism. Moreover, in their argument concerning the faith of the child, both Luther and Calvin appear to treatise that faith is the principal work of the Holy Spirit that the child receives as a gift.

Furthermore, Luther and Calvin accept Augustine's doctrine of original sin and guilt, which necessitates infant baptism. They seem to posit that baptism of infants results to their future repentance and faith, which the Holy Spirit stealthily works in them.

In spite of the seeming similarities in the theologies of Luther and Calvin on the role of faith in infant baptism, there are some aspects they appear to differ. Aside building their theologies on the doctrine of original sin, Luther's controversy with the Catholic Church over indulgence and penance seems to be another premise on which he builds his theology, while Calvin seems to develop his theology on God's eminent grace.

Again, Luther seems to subscribe to the alien faith as an aide to the infant while Calvin appears to object to the faith of the godparents or of the church as a surety of the child's faith. Calvin seems to maintain that the child receives faith from the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Moreover, at baptism, Luther appears to maintain that Christ Himself is the baptizer while Calvin seems to posit that Christ is the subject of baptism.

More so, Luther does not regard the baptismal water as mere water, but that which has become a gracious water of life by virtue of the Word with its inherent divine power.

While he appears to maintain that the Spirit of God infuses the baptismal water, Calvin seems to be silent on the nature of the water at baptism of the infant.

Another difference in their theologies is that Luther seems to hold that, at baptism of the infant, Christ imbues faith to the child while Calvin posits that Christ imputes His righteousness to the infant.

Patristic Writings

The paedobaptists appear to furnish their argument on the writings of the church Fathers such as, Origen, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Augustine of Hippo to support their arguments.¹⁴ For instance, Justin Martyr describes as living in his own time old people of sixty and seventy years of age, who became Christians from their childhood; to signify that they received baptism at their infancy. Similarly the words of Polycarp at his martyrdom, ‘Eighty and six years have I been his slave’, seem to imply that he had received baptism as an infant around A. D. 70. Moreover, the paedobaptists refer Irenaeus’ assertion that Christ came to give salvation to all human beings and that all who through him become new born unto God, “infants, and little ones, and boys, and youths, and old men,” to as the first reference to infant baptism. Further, Origen’s assertion in his ‘*Commentary on Romans*’ appears to be the fulcrum for the traditional view of infant baptism. The church Father maintains,

¹⁴T. H. L. Parker, *John Calvin*, 132-134. Flemington asserts that Martyr’s assertion, “who became disciples of Christ from their childhood”(oi ek paidon ematheteuthesan to Christo) naturally suggest that those the patriarch talks about received baptism as infants.

“The Church has received a tradition from the Apostles to give baptism to even little children.”¹⁵

However, there seems to be no biblical evidence to support the writings of the fathers. It seems that the evidences in these writings fail to provide irrefutable proof that the apostles administered infant baptism. Arguably, it appears to be only by a hypothesis that one can argue that the apostles administered baptism to infants; with no biblical record. According to Berkhof, Catholic scholars predominate those who support the practice of infant baptism based on the church’s tradition.¹⁶ The dogmatic tradition, which seems to endorse any kind of baptism, appears to maintain that baptism is a sacrament for initiating into the church those whom the gospel calls into repentance.¹⁷ This tradition seems to maintain that only those who can show repentance are legible candidates for baptism. In his attempt to treatise on faith a salvation, Cunningham observes that a large number of paedobaptists emphasize on the close relationship between faith and salvation than that of faith and baptism. These advocates consider baptism as a merely outward sign of regeneration.¹⁸

Biblical Scholars on the Issue

As much as Luther and Calvin have similar theologies and different teachings on the doctrine of infant baptism, likewise, biblical scholars exhibit these characteristics on the doctrine. Braaten, et al, appear to posit that baptism has twofold

¹⁵G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (1962 repr; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1973), 306.

¹⁶Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 638

¹⁷Carl E. Braaten, et al, ed., *Christian Dogmatics* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 2: 316.

¹⁸William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age* (1862; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 152.

purposes, namely initiation into the Christian Church for infants, and repentance from the known sins for adults. According to them, the baptismal formula by the apostle Peter in Acts 2:38, 39, succinctly state these two aspects.¹⁹ Nonetheless, they admit that despite centuries of scholarly effort, there has not been any evident of whether the apostolic church administered baptism to infants. They confess that, arguably, the customary practice of infant baptism started around the late and early parts of the second and third centuries respectively, and conclude that it did not become dominant until the end of the fourth century.²⁰

Weber concurs Braaten, et al, on the era that witnesses the introduction of infant baptism but seems to suggest earlier date. He opines that the practice of infant baptism increased around A.D. 200.²¹ He also maintains that the issue of infant baptism is alien to the New Testament.²² Their arguments seem that the apostles did not administer infant baptism. Moreover, Peter's challenge to his audience does not seem to call for the baptism of infants. He rather requested them to come to repentance.

Harrison, on expounding Peter's call for repentance to the Jews (Acts 2:39), suggests that the apostle endorses the covenant procedure in the Old Testament. He argues that in the view of the Old Testament background that there should be no

¹⁹Braaten, et al, ed., *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 316.

²⁰Braaten, et al, ed., *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 317, 318, 327. (See also Berkhof, 632. After rigorous study of the Scripture on the issue, Berkhof confesses that there is not a single instance in the Scriptures that suggests the practice of infant baptism. He argues that the lack of explicit biblical account on infant baptism could be that the conditions then did not favor the performance of the rite since most converts would not at once have a proper conception on their covenantal obligations and responsibilities. More so, he suggests that it might happen that one of the parents became converted and the other would oppose the baptism of their children).

²¹Otto Weber, *Foundations of Dogmatics*, ed., and trans. Darrell L. Luder (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 607.

²²*Ibid.* 609.

doubt that the household baptisms would include children who belonged to the families concerned.²³ Berkhof concurs Harrison and suggests that just as the children of proselytes received baptism at their parents' conversion, so the children of believing parents might have received baptism at the request of the father.²⁴ Enns, referencing from Lenski, maintains that infant baptism is scriptural, since it complements circumcision. He also relates it to household salvation (Acts 16:15, 31, 33, 34; 18; 8). He argues that as the infants in Israel economy received circumcision to join the elect community, the children of parents in the church should likewise receive baptism in order to become full members of the church.²⁵

However, Stevens suggests that Peter employs the word, 'children' for posterity.²⁶ Ladd concurs Stevens and posits that the 'promise' in Acts 2:39 does not warrant infant baptism. According to him, it means that the gospel is a blessing to both the apostolic age and the future generations, and not to only the Jews, but also, to the Gentiles.²⁷ Steven and Ladd's arguments seem to be correct because Peter does not preach on the renewal of the old covenant but on the promise of salvation in Jesus whom they should receive by faith.

²³Everett F. Harrison, et al , ed., *Wycliffe Dictionary of Theology* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2000), 87.

²⁴Berkhof, 622.

²⁵Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology*, ed., Jim Vincent and Allan Sholes (Chicago, IL: Moody, 2008), 376, 381. With reference to Lydia's household baptism (Acts 16: 15), Lenski states, 'Now, 'her house,' as here used, is the regular term for the members of one's immediate family. Thus any children Lydia may have had would be included (in baptism) The point at issue is in regard to children up to the age of discretion and not only 'infants' The apostles and their assistants baptized entire households and by baptism received them into the church.' R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 660. See also D. J. Williams, *Acts: A Good News Commentary* (San Francisco: Harper, 1985), p. 185; and William Neil, "The Acts of the Apostles," in *The New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1981), 143.

²⁶Stevens, 340.

²⁷Ladd, 387

Having admitted the lack of Scriptural evidence on the practice of infant baptism, Berkhof opines that infant baptism is appropriate because God's covenant with Abraham seems to be continuous in the New Testament. He argues that this covenant has the same Mediator, condition, blessing, and promise in both the Old and New Testament (Gen 17:9-14; Heb 8:10; Acts 4:12; 10:43; 15:11; 1 Tim 2:5, 6; 1 Pet 1:9-12; Rom 4:3; Gal 3:16; Rom 4:16-18).²⁸ He attempts to link infant baptism to circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant, to Christ laying His hands on children, and to the household baptisms in the New Testament (Gen 17:9-14; Mark 10:13-16; Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16).²⁹ He argues that, at least, children might have received baptism along with the parents in some of the household baptisms (Acts 16:15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16).³⁰ Berkhof's arguments for the validity of infant baptism seem to be hypothesis since they lack vivid evidence in the Scriptures.

In the same vein Booth contends that, throughout Scripture, God continues to relate to His people by way of gracious covenant, which is redemptive in nature. According to him, this covenant does not indicate regeneration of its present or future recipients, but set them apart for God's special blessing and use. He argues that this covenant thrives on the same way of salvation in both the Old and New Testaments, irrespective of some different outward signs.³¹

Booth's continuity theory seems to be incorrect since it overlooks the prerequisites of circumcision and baptism. Although circumcision and baptism are the outward signs of citizenry to the people of God in the Old Testament and New

²⁸Berkhof, 632.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Robert R. Booth, *Children of the Promise: The Biblical Case for Infant Baptism* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1995), 8, 10, 16.

Testaments, their conditions differ. Statutory, circumcision catered for males only, and the baby boy waits until the eighth day after birth before he receives it. Failure to comply with this law is tantamount to the death of the uncircumcised male baby (Gen 17:9-15). In contrast, baptism is for both genders, and with no time bound. Moreover, unlike circumcision, baptism requires recipient's repentance, and expression of faith in the Lord (Mark 16; 16; Acts 2:38; Matt 3:5, 6; Gal 3:27, 28).

Similarly, Wilson maintains that the prophecies of the coming new covenant explicitly incorporate children of believers (Isa 59:21; Jer 32:38-40; Ezek 37:24-26; Luke 1:48-50).³² He opines that anyone who might have attempted to teach the exclusion of the children of believing parents from the covenant in the first century would have taught "*incomprehensible doctrine*."³³ In his attempt to juxtapose the signs of the old and new covenants, he posits that whilst the sign of initiation into the old covenant was circumcision, the rite of induction into the new covenant is baptism. He concludes that, though the New Testament offers no explicit evidence to infant baptism, the case for infant baptism stands on the continuity of the covenant from the Old Testament to the New Testament.³⁴

Although the texts that Wilson has cited predict God's new covenant through faith in the Redeemer, they do not suggest infant baptism.³⁵ Moreover, his argument on the continuity of the covenants seems fragile because there is no biblical reference

³²Douglas Wilson, *To a Thousand Generations: Infant Baptism-Covenant Mercy for the People of God* (repr; 1953. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996), 13.

³³*Ibid.*, 14.

³⁴Wilson, 61.

³⁵Francis D. Nichol, ed. "A New Covenant" [Jer 31: 31], *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (SDABC), rev. ed., (Washington, DC: Review & Herald, 1976-1980), 4: 467.

to that effect. However, the Scriptures seem to maintain that the new covenant makes the old one obsolete and archaic (Gal 4:30; Heb 8:13).

However, Cunningham contends that the Scriptures provide implicit information on the supposition of infant baptism and maintains that salvation through Christ is just accessible to them as to adults.³⁶ He posits that the principles those determine and indicate the objects and effects of baptism in the adults and infants cannot be altogether the same.³⁷ His argument buttresses Braaten, et al, that baptism has twofold purposes, namely initiation into the Christian Church for infants, and repentance from the known sins for adults.³⁸ Their arguments seem to suggest that God employs different standards and principles for infants and adults in soteriology. Berkhof seems to resonate Cunningham and Braaten by his assertion that Jesus' baptismal command implies that faith is a prerequisite for the baptism of only the adult converts. Concerning infants, he maintains that Christ's words "do not hinder them" (Mark 10:14) annul the prerequisite of faith for the baptism of children.³⁹ However, Christ's decree "whoever believes and is baptized" does not segregate between infants and adults.

Berkhof argues that the Scripture has not laid down any rule that essentially requires active faith for the reception of baptism.⁴⁰ Commenting on the Great Commission, he maintains that the Lord demands faith from the adult converts but not

³⁶William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrine Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age* (1862; repr., Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1994), 148.

³⁷Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrine Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age*, 148.

³⁸Braaten, et al, ed., *Christian Dogmatics*, 2: 316.

³⁹Berkhof, 637.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 637.

from infants. He cautions against making faith the prerequisite for baptism and warns that such position makes faith ‘*the condition sine qua non*’ of salvation. He argues, this position may presuppose that infants will lose salvation.”⁴¹ Berkhof’s argument appears to be incorrect because he seems to set double standards for baptism.

Biblical Background

Building on the theology of believer’s baptism,⁴² Conner lists seven requirements for baptism in the New Testament as; hearing and observing the Word (Acts 2:41; 16:14,15; 19; 5), conviction (Acts 2:37), repentance (Acts 2:38), faith (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12, 37; 16:31, 33), obedience (Acts 9:6; 22:16), confession of Christ’s Lordship (Rom 10:9,10), and a clear conscience toward God (Rom 9:1; 1 Pet 3:18-20). He asserts that the above listed prerequisites for baptism, “clearly excludes infant baptism.” Citing some New Testament passages that seem to link faith to baptism (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:12-15, 35-38; 10:47, 48; 19:4, 5), he maintains that these occurrences suggest believers’ baptism.⁴³ Ladd concurs Conner when he asserts that only those who accepted the proclamation, repented, and received water baptism became members of the apostolic church.⁴⁴ Their arguments seem correct because it appears that the recipients of baptism in apostolic era exhibited those qualities, which infants cannot demonstrate.

⁴¹Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, 639.

⁴²Garrette, 527. Garrette observes that the theology of believer’s baptism identifies a prevailing New Testament sequence of preaching, hearing, confessing of one’s faith, and water baptism.

⁴³Kevin J. Conner, *The Church in the New Testament* (Portland, OR: City Bible Publishing, 1982), 286. See also Alan Richardson and John Bowden, ed, *A New Dictionary of Christian Theology* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 6. And Thomas Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, ed, *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ* (USA: B&H, 2006), 164

⁴⁴George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, ed, Donald A. Hagner (1974, repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 387.

In his attempt to concur believers' baptism as the practice in the New Testament, Flemington links the relationship between baptism and kerygma. He argues that in the book of Acts, the recipients of baptism first hear the preaching of the word that induces faith in them. He opines that baptism requires the distinctive expression of faith, and posits for the entwined relationship of baptism and faith.⁴⁵ This argument seems to be correct because Flemington appears to maintain that baptism is the outward expression of the recipient's inward repentance and faith, as a result of hearing the preaching of the word of God.

On the contrary, Staples describes the theory of believer's baptism as "misnomer." He argues against the assumption that faith is only possible in an adult.⁴⁶ However, in his counter argument for the validity of infant baptism, Staples appears to admit that, "the practice of infant baptism raises considerations which do not find explicit treatment within the New Testament."⁴⁷ Again, he concedes that it takes an allusion to interpret the New Testament teaching of baptism to a situation in which the distinctive beneficiary of baptism is an infant.⁴⁸ This seems to support the unanimous conclusion by scholars that there is no direct evidence for the baptism of infant in the New Testament.

Weber discourses that in the Jewish setting of the early Christian society, the proselytes and their children received baptism. Nevertheless, children who are present at the time of baptism received the rite but not those born thereafter. He argues that

⁴⁵F. W. Flemington, *The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism* (London: S. P. C. K. , 1964), 123, 124.

⁴⁶Rob L. Staples, *Outward Sign and Inward Grace: The Place of Sacraments in Wesleyan Spirituality* (Kansas City, MS: Beacon Hill Press, 1991), 164.

⁴⁷Ibid., 130. See also James Leo Garrett, Jr, *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical* (1990; repr., Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1996), 503.

⁴⁸Ibid.

the concept of baptism does not appear in passage of 1 Corinthians 7:14, neither does this text allude to infant baptism.⁴⁹

In the introduction of his edited book, *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, Strawbridge appears to rescind his argument for infant baptism. His conviction seems to be the result of his discovery of the explicit support for believer's baptism in the Scriptures. He hypothesizes the paedobaptists view of the circumcision in the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 17, and the relationship between circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11, 12, down to the infant baptism in the Reformed tradition before he arrives at his conclusion.⁵⁰

He advocates for the treatment of the question of infant baptism by proper application of biblical text since there is lack of explicit biblical texts that warrant or prohibit infant baptism.⁵¹ Strawbridge's advocacy seems to appeal for implicit application of the Scripture in order to get a support for the practice of infant baptism. More so he intends to posit that scholars apply all the biblical texts implicitly in order to either defend or contend the rite of infant baptism.

Cunningham concurs the mute of the Scriptures on the subject of infant baptism. He appears to concur Strawbridge's assertion that the Scriptures have provided little explicit information on infant baptism. However, he argues that the principles those define and denote the objects and effects of baptism in adults and infants cannot be usually the same. In his conclusion, he suggests the application of the fundamental ideas or inferred position to argue for the general doctrine of

⁴⁹Weber, *Foundation of Dogmatics*, 609- 611.

⁵⁰Strawbridge, *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, 3.

⁵¹Ibid. 5.

baptism.⁵² Cunningham's argument seems incorrect because it appears to set a double standard for the rite of baptism. This seems to be the reason why he proposes the application of fundamental ideas.

Strawbridge appears to posit for the inferred presupposition that seems to encourage the inclusion of children in the new covenant's initiation rite.⁵³ He seems to argue that as much as the anti-paedobaptists draw inferences to include their children in the new covenant, so also can the paedobaptists draw inference from the old covenant to apply the rite of baptism to their children in the new covenant.⁵⁴ It appears the inference argument pose a difficult challenge. If it holds true, then the paedobaptists have been baptizing boys only since girls did not undergo circumcision.

Beside the inference argument, the paedobaptists seem to derive analogy considerations to propel their position of the practice of infant baptism in the Scriptures. Firstly, they use the analogy of the Jewish proselyte baptism⁵⁵ to argue for their position. However, Flemington opines that this process allows for children

⁵²William Cunningham, *Historical Theology: A Review of the Principal Doctrinal Discussions in the Christian Church since the Apostolic Age*, 148. See also Douglas Wilson, *To a Thousand Generation: Infant Baptism-Covenant Mercy for the People of God*, 11. Wilson appears to expatiate these fundamental principles that seem to underpin the doctrine of infant baptism. In his attempt to suggest that the reader on infant baptism should refrain from scrutinizing only the biblical passages on incidents of baptism in the New Testament, the latter must also look up all the passages that address the fundamental ideas like parents, children, generations, descendants, promises, covenants, circumcision Jews, and Gentiles.

⁵³Strawbridge, 7.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Flemington, 131. The Jews would circumcise and baptize their convert proselytes, together with their children, into Judaism. The fact that the child could not make open confession of his own behalf was not regarded as any hindrance. It is argued that such an action on behalf of another is permissible so long as it is obviously for his good.

already born to a proselyte before his conversion to Judaism only. Any child who is born afterward received circumcision but not baptism.⁵⁶

However, Bultmann's attempt to juxtapose the Christian baptism and the proselyte baptism and reveals that the former closely connects with repentance while the latter is in conjunction with circumcision. Hence, he establishes that as circumcision preceded the proselyte baptism, so repentance also precedes Christian baptism.⁵⁷ Bultmann seems to posit for the believers' baptism where candidates express their personal faith.

On his treatise of the subjects of baptism, Grudem contends with the paedobaptists' views and attempts to posit for the believers' baptism. He bases his arguments on three main tenets. Firstly, he argues from the New Testament narrative passages on baptism (Acts 2:41; 8; 12; 10:44-48; 16:14, 15, 32, 33; 1 Cor 1:16; 16:15), and maintains that the recipients hear or receive the word. He insists that these passages suggest that those who have received the gospel and trusted in Christ for salvation received baptism.⁵⁸ Grudem seems to be correct here because in some occasions the addressees, having heard the word, or come into contact with the apostles, enquired what do (Acts 2:37; 16:30).

Secondly, he argues from the exegetical meaning of the baptism (Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3, 4; Col 2:12), that it is "an outward sign of inward regeneration." He contends that this internal regeneration cannot happen to infants who exercise no faith

⁵⁶Ibid. The paedobaptists consider baptism as a counterpart of circumcision. For this, they argue that the fact that circumcision is administered to infants born within the old Covenant would encourage Christians to administer baptism to their infants in the new Covenant.

⁵⁷Rudolf Bultmann, *Theology of the New Testament* (1948, repr., London, SCM Press, 1978), 1: 39.

⁵⁸Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (1994, repr., England: Intersity Press, 2014), 970.

for themselves that is responsible for the renewal of the ‘inward man.’⁵⁹ Grudem seems to identify a direct relationship between faith and baptism.

Thirdly, Grudem accepts the explicit connection between circumcision in the old covenant, and baptism in the new covenant (Col 2:11, 12). However, he seems to draw sharp contrasts about both of their operations and recipients. He asserts that though the two rituals are similar in many ways, they symbolize different important ways. Therefore, in his argument on juxtaposition of circumcision and baptism, he submits that whereas the old covenant had a physical and external mean of admittance into the covenant community (Gen 17:10-13), that the means of admittance into the new covenant is “voluntary, spiritual, and internal.”⁶⁰ Grudem seems to be correct because while individuals received circumcision without expressing any personal faith to become an automatic member of the Jewish community, baptism requires the faith of the recipient and makes one become a Christian by choice. Moreover, circumcision appears to be an involuntary rite that preceded membership into the old covenant, but baptism seems to be a voluntary rite that precedes membership into the new covenant.

Williams concurs Grudem that the proper subjects for the rite of baptism are those who believe in the Lord. After making Scriptural analysis on some baptismal passages in the book of Acts (Acts 2:41; 8:12; 8:35, 38; 10:48; 16:14, 15; 16:31-33; 18:8; 19:4, 5), he concludes, “Baptism in all these passages is clearly linked to faith:receiving the word, believing the good news, responding to the gospel

⁵⁹Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 971.

⁶⁰Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 976, 977. See also J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 283.

message.”⁶¹ Williams’s analysis appears to be in consonant with the exegetical interpretations of baptismal narrative in the book of Acts. Moreover, by critical consideration of the passages, it seems that the beneficiaries of baptism in the households first heard the gospel preached to them. They in turn requested what they should do in order to receive salvation. And, when the apostles told them to repent, they did so and subsequently, received baptism.

Davis, in his treatise of repentance and faith, defines repentance as that which “involves a frank acknowledgment of sin, sorrow for it, and a determination to forsake the sin.” He also attempts to describe faith as, “a commitment of the whole person to Christ as Lord and Saviour in response to the free offer of salvation in the gospel.”⁶² Davis’ description of faith and repentance presupposes that infants could not receive baptism from the apostles.

Moreover, this faith is a personal response and personal decision that a Christians take when they have accepted the gospel message. The apostle Paul emphasizes unequivocally, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God (Rom 10:17, NKJV). Thus, faith always manifests in individual after hearing the word of God. Grudem, quoting Morris in the latter’s exposition of faith, affirms

⁶¹J. Rodman Williams, *Renewal Theology: The Church, the Kingdom, and Last Things*, Vol. 3” in *Renewal Theology: Systematic Theology from a Charismatic Perspective; Three Volumes in One* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 229. Acts 2: 41, Those who received Peter’s word were baptized. Acts 8: 12, “When they [the Samaritans] believed Philip he preached the good news....they were baptized, both men and women.” Acts 8: 35, 38, “Philip told him the good news of Jesus. And he baptized him. Acts 10: 48, “He commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus.” Acts 16: 31-33, “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... immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.” Acts 18: 8, “Crispus...believed in the Lord, together with all household; and many of the Corinthians...believed and were baptized.” Acts 19: 4, 5, “Paul said, ‘John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling them the people to believe in the one who was to come after him, that is Jesus.’ On hearing this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

⁶²John J. Davis, *Let the Bible Teach You Christian Doctrine* (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1985), 77. Davis cites God’s promise He gave to Solomon at the dedication of the temple (2 Chr 7: 14).

that faith “is a conscious activity . . . of personal trust.”⁶³ Per Morris’ definition of faith, it seems that there is a relationship between faith and hearing of the word of God, which appears to result in baptism. And since infants seem to be in destitute of these qualities, they cannot receive baptism.

Another scriptural background this work seeks to analyze is Jesus’ act of blessing children in the synoptic gospels (Matt 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; Luke 18:15, 16). The paedobaptists appear to make usage of these passages as a biblical foundation for infant baptism. In his treatise of these texts, Erickson observes that both Jeremias and Cullmann consider their inception as ‘*Sitz im Leben.*’⁶⁴ They seem to suggest that the writers of the Gospels include them in order to justify infant baptism in the apostolic church. However, Geisler, expounding Calvin’s doctrine on the “Elect-Infant Salvation” in connection with Matt 19:14, maintains that Jesus personally and really blessed the children.⁶⁵ Nonetheless, Erickson insists that the passages do not contain baptism.⁶⁶ Erickson’s conclusion seems to be correct because the passages do not suggest any hint of baptism.

Commenting on the Great Commission, Berkhof contends that Jesus has the missionary work in mind when giving the gospel commission. After his discourse on Matt 28:19, Mark 16:16; Acts 10:44-48; 16:14, 15, 31, 34; which seem to demand the expression of faith before baptism, Berkhof appears to concede that “children are naturally excluded.” Nonetheless, Wilson maintains that individuals in the households

⁶³Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*, 711.

⁶⁴Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1112.

⁶⁵Norman L. Geisler, *Systematic Theology: In One Volume* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Bethany House, 2011), 988.

⁶⁶Erickson, 1112.

did not receive baptism because they necessarily believe; rather they receive baptism because they belonged to the household of believers.⁶⁷

The absence of explicit New Testament indication of infant baptism seems to spearhead in the report of the Joint Committees on Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Communion of the Church of England.⁶⁸ Confirming his position on the lack of any New Testament notation of infant baptism, Erickson quotes from the report, ““It is clear that the recipients of Baptism were normally adults and not infants, and it must be admitted that there is no conclusive evidence in the New Testament for Baptism of infants. ... In the New Testament, the Gospel has been heard and accepted, and the condition of faith ... has been consciously fulfilled prior to the reception of the Sacrament.””⁶⁹ This assertion appears to clear any possibility of infants receiving of baptism in the apostolic era.

A sizeable number of biblical scholars appear to concede this lack of evidence of infant baptism in the New Testament. However, they maintain the possibility notion that the household baptisms included infants. Erickson mentions Jeremias as the prominent amongst those scholars who argue for the possibility of infants in the households who received baptism. Jeremias maintains that adults, as well as children, received baptism in the households. Expounding on Acts 11:14; 16:15; 16:31-34; 18:8, and 1 Corinthians 1:16, Jeremias opines that, the etymological evidence forbids the restriction of the concept of the ‘house’ to the adult members of the family. He

⁶⁷Wilson, 143.

⁶⁸Cyril E. Pocknee, *Baptism and Confirmation Today* (London: SCM, 1955), 34.

⁶⁹Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 1111.

argues, “It is the complete family including all its members which receives baptism.”⁷⁰

However, Beasley-Murray contends that Jeremias’ argument with reference to linguistic evidence appears to be logical though; it can lead to a wide range of conclusions. He argues that it is not only baptism that takes place in the households, but also preaching and hearing of the gospel, and on one instance, the ‘household’ speak with tongues as well (cf Acts 10:44-48).⁷¹

Arguing from this perspective in contention with Jeremias, Beasley- Murray challenges that if Jeremias’ principle holds true concerning the meaning of Acts 10:44-48, then it means that everybody in the household of Cornelius, including infants, hears the word, receives the Spirit, and speaks with tongues. He stresses, “To this no exception is permissible.”⁷² Thus, by considering the activities that take place in totality in Cornelius’ household, Beasley-Murray seems to suggest that infants did not receive baptism since they cannot speak even with tongues. Jeremias contention in connection with the infants’ inability to speak in tongues appears to be incorrect because Jesus asserts that God has decreed praise from the lips of children and infants (Matt 21:16). However, it appears valid that infants did not receive baptism in the New Testament times.

Commenting on household baptism passages in the New Testament (Acts 10:44-48; 11:14; 16:14, 15, 33, 34; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:16), Sartelle perceives that these households are not childless, and suggests that the children in these households may

⁷⁰Joachim Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism: A Further Study in Reply to Karl Aland*, trans. Dorothea M. Barton (London: SCM, 1965), 25.

⁷¹George R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan, 1962), 315.

⁷²Ibid.

probably receive baptism.⁷³ However, there seems to be lack of precedent of infant baptism to which the above passages can imply. That is, if the apostle had taught and practiced infant baptism elsewhere in the Scriptures, then the paedobaptists could cite the passages as explicit example to support their argument.

On his in-depth assessment on the issue of infant baptism, Garrette maintains that there is no trace of infant baptism in the apostolic era.⁷⁴ Stevens appears to concur Garrette and suggests that the household passages could mean either all members in the family were matured enough to believe, and subsequently received baptism or only those who were matured enough believed and became recipients of baptism. He maintains that the ‘household passages’ do not incorporate the children of the household.⁷⁵

Beasley-Murray has attempted to give critical analysis on the phrases related to household baptisms. These comprise the angelic message to Cornelius, “you and all your household will be saved” (Acts 11:14), of Lydia, “she and the members of her household were baptized,” of the Phillipian jailor, “then immediately he and all his family were baptized,” of Crispus “and his entire household believed in the Lord ... passages that might suggest that the entire household, including the wife, infants, and slaves received baptism on the account on the house lord’s faith.⁷⁶ However, he contends that, by critical exegesis, it appears that the paedobaptists have over-turned the interpretations of the texts.⁷⁷

⁷³John P. Sartelle, *Infant Baptism: What Christian Parents Should Know* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1985), 8.

⁷⁴Garrette, 527.

⁷⁵Stevens, *Doctrines of the Christian Religion*, 339.

⁷⁶Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 312-313.

⁷⁷*Ibid.*, 314.

He attempts to employ exegesis to the texts to bring out the thought: Of Cornelius' household, Luke reports on the recipients of the baptism that "The Holy Spirit came on all who *heard the message* ... For they heard them *speaking in tongues and praising God* ... So he [Peter] ordered that they be baptised" (Acts 10:44-48, italics mine). Moreover, of the jailor's household, Luke records, "Then *they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house*...then immediately he and all his family were baptized" (Acts:16:32, 33, italics mine). Furthermore, of Crispus' household, Luke states: "the synagogue ruler, and *his entire household believed in the Lord*; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized" (Acts 18:8, italics mine). The apostle Paul appears to testify of Stephanas household that they "were the first converts in Achaia, and *they devoted themselves to the service of the saints*" (1 Cor 16:15, italics mine).⁷⁸

From the exegesis on the household passages, it appears that the recipients of baptism cannot be infants but those whose sense organs have developed such that they can hear the message of the Lord, believe in the Lord, speak to praise the Lord, and to devote themselves to the services of the church. This conclusion seems to concur Alford's comment that Murray employs that '*kai o oikos sou,*' that is, and his house, does not denote that his faith saves his entire household but that the members of the house also believed in the Lord.⁷⁹

It appears that the household baptism seems to be the much-disputed issue in connection with the practice of infant baptism.⁸⁰ Analysis on the biblical narratives on baptism seems to reveal that the evidence, which shows the absence of biblical

⁷⁸Beasley-Murray, 315, 316.

⁷⁹Ibid., 319.

⁸⁰J. A. Alexander, *Acts*. 1857; repr., (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1980), 2: 113

support for infant baptism, outweighs the argument for the practice. The analysis appears to prove that scholars cannot settle the debate on the role of faith in infant baptism on the grounds of exegetical data in the New Testament except on theological grounds. The analysis has revealed that both paedobaptists and the anti-paedobaptists appear to support their respective positions with the same biblical passages on baptism.

CHAPTER 4

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In this final chapter of the thesis, the writer summarizes the findings of the work, and draws objective conclusion. Moreover, the writer will attempt to discuss the implications of the theology of Luther and Calvin on the topic under review on Christianity. Furthermore, the writer will suggest some areas that will need further study.

Summary

The topic under review seems not to attract any scholarly debate prior to the Protestant reformation. Among the church Fathers, it appears that only Tertullian (AD 155-220) seems to oppose the practice. Tertullian's fear is that, it subjects the infants under a heavy responsibility that may crush their Christian life in case they commit sin after the ordinance. It appears that other church Fathers endorsed the practice against the backdrop of the doctrine of original guilt that Augustine of Hippo (AD 354-430) later became its proponent.

The topic under review became disputable during the Reformation. In an attempt to contend the Anabaptists' opposition to the practice of infant baptism due to lack of faith of the infants, Luther and Calvin propounded their respective doctrines to address the issue. The fundamental thought that seems to be the bedrock of their theology is the idea of original sin.

Since the Reformation, a myriad of scholars have argued on this issue. In this work, many scholars have also argued on their different positions concerning the role

of faith that seems to make infant baptism a legitimate biblical practice. Some scholars such as Jeremias, Cunningham, Braaten, Booth, Enns, Sartelle, Stasiak, Cullmann, and Staples appear to maintain that infant baptism is biblical. The prominent among these scholars seems to be Joachim Jeremias. Other scholars who appear to contend the practice of administering baptism to infants because of their inability to express their faith are Beasley-Murray, Weber, Ladd, Grudem, Conner, Williams, Flemington, and Bultmann. These scholars posit that infant baptism is unbiblical. The protruding figure amongst them appears to be Beasley-Murray.

On the other hand, other scholars appear to remain neutral in their arguments. They seem to admit the absence of scriptural evidence on infant baptism because of the children's lack of faith that seems to be the prerequisite of baptism. However, they appear to subscribe to the practice by their conviction of the continuity of the Abrahamic covenant. Such scholars include Berkhof, Erickson, Harrison, and Strawbridge. Louis Berkhof appears to be the leading figure among them.

Modern biblical scholars such as Friedrich Schleiermacher (AD 1768-1834) and Karl Barth (AD 1886-1968) also seem to contend the practice for not only the lack of faith on the part of the infant, but also the absence of explicit biblical evidence. These scholars appear to express their wish for the abandonment of infant baptism at the Protestant reformation by reformists like Luther and Calvin.

Luther and Calvin seem to have related background; both are from intransigent Catholic homes, and brilliant students among their peers. Luther's father had wanted him to become a lawyer; however, he became a Roman Catholic priest of Augustinian Order. In contrast, Calvin's father planned for him to become a Catholic priest, but Calvin studied to be a humanist lawyer before his conversion into pastoral

occupation. Luther's theology seems to anchor on faith, whilst that of Calvin appears to hook on grace.

Luther and Calvin appear to share some similar thoughts, and different opinions in the issue under consideration. In related perspectives, Luther and Calvin appear to converge on the following:

1. They appear to build their theology on Augustine's doctrine of original sin.
2. They appear to posit that the Word of God sanctions all sacraments, including infant baptism.
3. They appear to posit for the soteriological aspect of sacrament that seems to make infant baptism a necessity.
4. They opine that the Scriptures set an analogical relationship between baptism and circumcision.
5. Both Luther and Calvin seem to argue on Christ's invitation to the little children as a basis for infant baptism (Mark 10:13-16).
6. Luther and Calvin appear to hold that the Holy Spirit imparts faith to the infant at baptism, which the mortal eye cannot envision.

Notwithstanding the above seeming agreement of Luther and Calvin's theology on the topic under discussion, they appear to differ in some aspects of their respective theology. Below are their differences:

1. In addition to the doctrine on original sin, Luther appears to propound his theology over indulgence and penance, whilst Calvin seems to build his theology on God's eminent grace aside the doctrine of original sin.
2. At baptism, Luther appears to subscribe to the alien faith as a guarantee to the infants before Christ imparts faith in them, but Calvin seems to posit that Christ bestows the holistic faith on the infants.

3. Luther seems to maintain that Christ is the baptizer while Calvin appears to posit that Christ is the subject of baptism.
4. Luther seems to argue that the Word of God infuses the baptismal font that mystically changes the water to become uncommon. However, Calvin appears to argue that it is rather the Spirit of God that infuses the water.
5. Luther appears to posit that Christ imbues faith in the infant at baptism while Calvin argues that Christ imputes His righteousness on the child at baptism.

A comparative study in this work on Luther and Calvin's perspectives on the role of faith in infant baptism appears to reveal that they agree and disagree on almost equal points.

Implications

The theology of Luther and Calvin on the topic under review seems to pose some implications on Christianity. Their supports for infant baptism seem to encourage proliferation of uncommitted Christians; Christians who did not take personal decisions to get baptized but received baptism unaware.

Since they do not give exegetical interpretation on various biblical passages on baptism, their adherents may follow their example and thereby promote wrong exegesis in their biblical interpretations.

Luther and Calvin's insistence of the presence of the Holy Spirit at baptism to infuse the baptismal water can lead to spiritism and superstition; a tradition that may struggle against the development of faith in the Lord.

The writer wishes to suggest related areas that need further studies such as the age and mode of baptism, and the doctrine of original sin. Other area may include the retrospective of God's covenant in the New Testament.

Conclusion

On closer examination, it appears that the biblical basis for the practice of infant baptism is lacking. Of course, children of all ages were present in the early church. The church took special interest in them because Jesus had considered them to be especially precious in God's sight. But the New Testament texts on baptism do not support the practice of infant baptism. Infant baptism seems to be a traditional doctrine by the Catholic Church that appears to have begun in the postapostolic times. Augustine of Hippo appears to have made it a doctrine in the fourth century AD. Moreover, Luther and Calvin attempt to propound their respective theology in support of it.

However, Luther and Calvin are unable to substantiate their arguments with any explicit biblical passage because their doctrine of infant baptism has no ground in the New Testament. Christ's mandate to His disciples to preach the gospel and baptize states, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved" (Mark 16:16).

This command requires the recipients of baptism to hear the preaching, express their faith in Christ, and then be baptized. Since infants lack these prerequisites, they appear as the unqualified candidates for baptism; and their baptism becomes unbiblical.

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