

by individual persons, but those persons did not consider themselves as “individuals” with only self-chosen connections with others, but as a necessarily connected person, defined by having relatives and belonging to others. There is no individualism in the classic Anglican Formularies (*The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Thirty-Nine Articles* and *The Ordinal*) or in *The Two Books of Homilies* of the Church of England. In contrast, the literature, preaching and context of the emerging and growing “Baptist” churches over the last century and more in America, especially, cannot be explained without the rising presence of individualism in culture and society. Overstated, the local church is here a community of individuals and Baptism is the self-chosen act of an individual who claims to believe to witness to this.

One effect of the conditioning factors described above is that the early Fathers and the Reformers took it for certain that Jesus, his disciples, and Gentiles who came into the Church after being Jewish proselytes, naturally thought of the infant children of both Jews and Christians as rightful heirs of God’s covenant of grace. This did not remove the duty of all human persons—man, woman and children—to be faithful servants of the LORD God, but it did declare with certainty their standing in terms of the Covenant. God had chosen them and they were to respond appropriately! From this perspective the Baptism of infant children of baptized Christian parents, already potentially in the covenant of grace, was “most agreeable with the institution of Christ.” And it was also, from this perspective, clearly seen as assumed or presented in the whole Canon of Scripture, even though there is not a simple command anywhere which says, “Baptize infants,” or a simple description anywhere of the actual Baptism of an infant.



### Biblical Evidence

Within the approach of the Early Fathers and Reformers to the whole Bible, one sees the appropriateness, rightfulness and evidence of/for Infant

Baptism in the following types of consideration and reflection:

1. The death of Jesus upon the Cross at Calvary which was “a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation and satisfaction, for the sins of the whole world.” As the Second Adam, the New Man and New Israel, Jesus represented all mankind and died not for his own sins but as the Representative and Substitute of sinful mankind, including all new born infants. Thus we may say that all children belong to Christ, for he has redeemed them, and so they are, in the right context and under the right conditions,

the appropriate recipients of the sign and seal of that redemption, which is Baptism.

2. Children have a divinely-given and divinely-required place in the Abrahamic covenant of grace. This is made clear by the word of the Lord God heard by Abram in Genesis 17:9-14, after a series of encounters recorded in Genesis 15 and 16, where God establishes his covenant of grace with Abram and his offspring. The Lord told Abraham:

*You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be*

*a sign of the covenant between me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised... Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from my people; he has broken my covenant.*

In the person of Abraham circumcision was the sign and seal of an existing faith in the Lord God (see Paul’s comment in Romans 4:11); but with respect to infant boys it is the pledge and seal of the covenant status and blessings promised to them. Though administered by man, it presents the movement of God to man, the bringing of the very young man into a covenant relation. But what of the status of women and girls for whom there was in their flesh no specific sign and seal of covenant membership given? The covenant which requires male circumcision operates on the principle of the unity of the head of the household/family with its members and so the family is included in the head, which is the male, who is the husband and father. Thus females are certainly in the covenant of grace

and are required, along with males, to trust, love, obey and serve the LORD God, walking in his ways and keeping his commandments (see the account of the covenant ceremony in Deuteronomy 29 where the presence of children is recorded in verses 10-12). What circumcision points to, prefigures and typifies, as a sign and seal of the Abrahamic covenant of grace, is Baptism in the “new covenant” administered to adults and infants, but now also both to males and females, because this final, complete and everlasting phase of the historical administration of the covenant of grace is the clearest and richest, and so the covenant blessings are made over specifically and really and personally to all the elect of God.

In Colossians 2:11-14, St Paul makes an explicit connection between spiritual circumcision and Christian baptism:

*In Christ you were circumcised with a circumcision without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands.*

While this specific teaching of the Apostle to the Gentiles does not prove the existence of baptized infants in the Church at Colossae, it does underline the connections within the One Covenant of Grace in terms of admission and the work of God in the hearts of those admitted.

3. Before the ministry of John the Baptist, and during the period of the Ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, Gentiles who wished to become God-fearers, members of the Jewish synagogue and eventually fully-initiated Jews, began their conversion by going through a ceremony of cleansing by water, in order to wash away all the ceremonial uncleanness accrued by living as a Gentile outside the Torah. This proselyte baptism was administered to all members of the household, the father and husband, the wife and mother, and all the children of both sexes, for the simple reason that all had lived in the Gentile world and were ceremonially unclean. After Baptism only the males were circumcised. However, the existence and knowledge of these household baptisms of Gentiles may well have influenced the way in which the families of heads of households were baptized along with the head himself (see below Numbers 5 and 6).

4. The attitude and words of Jesus in relation to children support and underline their place in the covenant of grace. In the Service of Baptism for Infants in *The Book of Common Prayer*, the Gospel

reading is Mark 10: 13-16. We read these words of Jesus: “Let the children come to me; do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God.” Then we learn that “he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.” Following this Gospel-reading there is a very short exhortation upon it by the Minister. In this he declares: “Doubt ye not, therefore, but earnestly believe that Christ will likewise favorably receive this Infant; that he will embrace him with the arms of his mercy; that he will give unto him the blessing of eternal life, and make him partaker of his everlasting kingdom.” Little children are certainly capable of receiving the blessings of the covenant of grace.

5. It is most likely that in one or more of all of the baptisms of the members of a household recorded in the New Testament small children were included (as they were in Baptism of Gentile families becoming Jews). There is first of all the baptism of the God-fearer Cornelius in Acts 10: 12, 46-48 & 11.14. Then in Acts 16: 14-15 is the record of the Baptism of Lydia and her household, and in verses 25-34 is the account of the jailor in Philippi being baptized, “he and all his family.” Acts 18:8 refers to the Jew Crispus and his family being baptized and St Paul states: “I baptized the household of Stephanus” (1 Corinthians 1:16). With the head of the household are baptized all its members. It is difficult to believe that there was not one small child in their number! And it is difficult to imagine the infants and small children left in their cradles while everyone else, servants and all, were baptized.

6. The way that St Paul writes to children in his Epistles assumes that they are members of the household of God, “in Christ” and thus baptized. In Colossians 3:20-21 he addresses both children and their parents, presuming both are in church membership. “Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged.” Then in Ephesians 6:1-4 he writes: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (this is the first commandment with a promise), that you may live long in the land. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”

[For serious discussion of the evidence from the Early Church see Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries* (1960), the response by Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (1963) and the reply from Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism* (1965). For Peter Toon, *Mystical Washing & Spiritual Regeneration. Infant Baptism* (2007), visit [www.anglicanmarketplace.com](http://www.anglicanmarketplace.com) or call 1-800-PBS-1928.]

# The Public Baptism of Infants

*(Based on the Text in the English BCP of 1662)*

*This service is normally to be used within Morning or Evening Prayer (after the second Lesson) or within Holy Communion (after the Epistle). It may be used for the Baptism of one of more infants. Each infant boy should have two male and one female Godparents and each infant girl two female and one male Godparents.*

*The Minister will normally be a priest but a deacon may take this service when necessary.*

*Italics indicates an instruction or rubric, bold type a response by the congregation or members thereof, and regular type what the Minister says.*

**D**earest beloved in Christ, the Sacrament of Baptism is administered because our Lord Jesus Christ taught us that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born of water and the Holy Spirit. This new birth is necessary because all human beings have both a natural disposition toward evil and also commit sin. They cannot save themselves. Therefore, I urge you to call upon God the Father, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that in his great mercy he will grant new birth to *this Child*; and that *he* may be baptized with water and the Holy Spirit, and received into Christ's holy Church and made *a living member*.

Let us pray.

**A**lmighty and everlasting God, who in great mercy saved Noah and his family in the Ark from perishing in the flood, who safely led the children of Israel, your people, through the Red Sea, symbolizing thereby holy Baptism, and who by the Baptism in the river Jordan of your Son, Jesus Christ, sanctified water to the mystical washing away of sin; in your infinite mercy look on *this Child*, wash and sanctify *him* by the Holy Spirit, we pray, in order that, being delivered from your wrath, *he* may be received into the Ark of Christ's Church. Make *him* to be steadfast in faith, joyful through hope, and rooted in love, so that passing through the difficulties caused by the world, *he* may finally come to the land of everlasting life, there to reign with you forever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**A**lmighty and immortal God, who gives aid to the needy, strength to the helpless, and everlasting life in a resurrected body to those who believe, we pray for *this Infant*, who is coming to your holy Baptism that he may receive forgive-

ness of his sins by spiritual regeneration. Receive *him* as you have promised by your Beloved Son in the Gospel, that he may enjoy the blessing of your heavenly washing, and may come to the eternal kingdom, which you have promised by Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Let us hear the words of our Lord Jesus Christ from the Gospel according to St Mark (10.13-16)

**“A**nd they were bringing children to him that he might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, ‘Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’ And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.”

**B**eloved in Christ, you hear in this Gospel the words of our Savior Christ commanding the children to be brought to him. You see how, after rebuking those who tried to prevent him, and commending the example provided by a child, he declared his good will towards the children as he took them in his arms, and blessed them. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and for ever. Do not doubt, therefore, but earnestly believe, that he loves *this Child*, that he approves our bringing of *him* to holy Baptism, that he is ready to receive *him* with the arms of his mercy, and to give *him* the blessing of eternal life. And so being persuaded of the good will of our heavenly Father towards *this Infant*, declared by his Son Jesus Christ, let us faithfully and devoutly give thanks to him, and say together,

**A**lmighty and everlasting God, heavenly Father, we humbly thank you for having

called us to the knowledge of your grace and to faith in you. Increase this knowledge and confirm this faith in us for ever. Give your Holy Spirit to *this Infant*, that *he* may be born again, and be made *an heir* of everlasting salvation; through our Lord Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and for ever. Amen.

*Here the parents and Godparents stand and the Minister says to them,*

**B**eloved in Christ, you have brought *this Child* to be baptized in this place, you have prayed that our Lord Jesus Christ would be pleased to receive, to cleanse, to sanctify, and to make *him an heir* of the kingdom of heaven and everlasting life. You have heard that our Lord Jesus Christ has promised in the Gospel all these things and we know that he keeps his promises. Since *this Child* is not yet able to answer for *himself*, you must on your part, as the ones taking responsibility, undertake on behalf of *this Infant* three things: first, that *he* will renounce the devil and all his works; secondly, that *he* will constantly believe God's holy Word; and thirdly, that *he* will obediently keep God's commandments.

I ask you therefore,

**D**o you, in the name of *this Child*, renounce the devil and all his works, the vain show and glory of this evil world, with all the its covetousness, and the sinful desires of human nature, so that you will not follow nor be led by them?

**I renounce them all.**

**D**o you in the name of *this Child* believe the Christian Faith?

**I believe in God the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. And I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried. He descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.**

**D**o you in the name of *this Child* desire Baptism?

**That is my desire.**

**D**o you in the name of *this Child* promise obedience to God's holy will and commandments and to walk in them all the days of your life?

**I do so promise, with God's help.**

**W**ill you pray for this child and seek to ensure that he may learn and do all these things?

**I will, with God's help.**

*Then shall the Minister make the following supplications:*

**M**erciful God, grant that the sinful Adam in *this Child* may be so buried that the new Adam may rise up in *him*. **Amen.**

**G**rant that all sinful desires may die in *him*, and that all things belonging to the Spirit may live and grow in *him*. **Amen.**

**G**rant that *he* may have power and strength by faith to have victory and to triumph against the devil, the world and sinful human nature. **Amen.**

**G**rant that whoever here is dedicated to you by our office and ministry may also be endowed with heavenly virtues, and everlastingly rewarded, through your mercy, Blessed Lord God, who live and govern all things, for ever and ever. **Amen.**

*The Minister moves to the font with the Godparents and Parents.*

**A**lmighty, everlasting God, whose most dearly beloved Son, for the forgiveness of our sins, shed from his most precious side at the Cross both water and blood; and later gave commandment to his disciples, that they should go teach all nations and baptize them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Hear, we implore you, the prayer of your people; sanctify this Water to the mystical washing away of sin; and grant, that *this Child*, now to be baptized in it, may receive the fullness of your grace, and ever remain in the number of your faithful and elect children; through Jesus Christ our