

The history about baptism theology religion essay



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The topic I chose is connected with such an action in Christianity as baptism. I always was interested in that action and only not so far ago I discovered that I am baptized too by my aunt. That news caused contradictory thoughts in my mind since I asked nobody to baptize me, maybe I would like to become a Muslim or Buddhist in the future, but after baptizing I felt myself being close to Jesus Christ and God, the Father. So should we baptize children without their will or should we give them a choice and is it enough just to sprinkle them or fully submerge them into water? The only one thing is true; baptism should be performed by adults and they have to be fully emerged into water.

First of all it is necessary to define what baptism is. According to the Bible, "Baptism is the act of washing or dipping a person in the water. Baptism shows that a person's sins washed away. He or she has joined the family of God and now is united with Jesus in dying to sin and rising to new life." The word "to baptize" came from the Greek word "to overcome," "to cover completely with a liquid" (Carson d a, Douglas J Moo). In fact, baptism plays a crucial role in life of every Christian since this is the act of cleaning from sins and coming close to God. In fact, every person who seeks salvation should be baptized, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe" (Mark, 16: 16, New International Version). In fact, it "the baptismal rite's explicit transfer of a new Christian's allegiance from the old gods to the risen Lord became less necessary and, ultimately, largely unintelligible" (Buchanan, C. 2006).

So should infants be baptized in Church? It is necessary to mention that our early life is fully depended on our parents who have a significant impact on

our life and our destiny. If our parents are Christians or at least live in a country where Christian beliefs are considered as dominant values and Christianity is a main religion, then children are usually baptized while being infants. This is so, because of parental habits to take care of their children and parents think after being baptized, children will be saved and will be under God's protection during their life. Usually parents also present children a chain-cross that is considered as a charm. " Many are deluded into thinking they are spiritually secure because the act has been performed" (Tidball, D. 2006). Unfortunately, most people don't even understand the importance of baptism in our life. One thing that most people don't know is that baptism is an action devoted to Christ's death and his further resurrection. " We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Romans. 6: 4, New International Version). Therefore, it is improperly to consider baptism to be a salvation or protection during our Earth life before resurrection.

Baptism is the act that can be performed by Christians, moreover by those people who voluntarily and consciously came to that decision. Of course infants can't decide whether they want to be baptized; even children can express their unwillingness to participate in this process, but infants seem to be absolutely helpless. All in all, only adults can be baptized. If we remember, even Jesus was baptized when he was an adult, not when he was an infant. " At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan River" (Carson, D. A. & Moo, J. Douglas, 1992). Later Jesus, according to the Bible baptized people with the Holy Spirit.

During the last time, infant baptism has become a danger of turning into a family event and not a Church event. Usually this action is considered as a feast, after which people have celebrations. For instance, I remember last summer working in the USA when my manager who was originally from Mexico came to work with horrible hangover. When I asked him what happened he told he was at his nephew's baptism party. He mentioned that people in Mexico see baptism as a special event in their lives; they usually have a huge amount of guests like on weddings, eat, drink and have dances.

On the other hand, one might say that baptism is only the act that shows infants to be believers, the promise that they can't express verbally. Nobody forces people to become Christians after being baptized, rather this is the person's relatedness to God. There are still several facts which support the baptism of infants due to several reasons

1) Infants and little children are innocent; they don't know bad and good is and what sin is. Jesus told that children are examples for adults and in the kingdom of God; adults should also be innocent and clean like children. " Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heavens belongs to such as these" (Math 19: 14, New International Version).

2) Early church and some Theologians advocated the baptism of children. For example Aristide told that a child is God's gift, which is why by baptizing him, we thank God for his grace. Origen claimed that when children are born, they carry the Adam's guilt and baptism is the only way to vanish this guilt.

Cyprian was the first bishop who developed child's baptism as a theological

movement. He also claimed that a child has a “ mortal spot,” a plague that he or she inherited from the first humans.

To baptize infants or not is a hard questions and every family should decide whether to perform this act or wait until the child get older and consciously decide to do it. Anyway, we also have to give a choice to a person and if parents will detail describe an importance of baptizing, their child will do a right choice in the future and will be baptized. However, the process of baptizing leads to the next question concerning the purification by water. So should we immerse a person into water or it is just enough to sprinkle some drops to him. For my opinion the answer is obvious; we necessarily have to immerse a person into water, not necessarily to immerse fully with a head, but at least the full body. By being baptized, a person washes all his sins, even not literally, but physically when a person washes he needs to be fully covered with water. Moreover, a person should plunge or be plunged three times, thereby symbolizing Trinity; a person is baptized in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Also, Bible tells us that in order to be baptized, we have to fully be covered with water. For example verse John 3: 23 tells us, “ Now John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because there was plenty of water, and people were constantly coming to be baptized.”(New International Version). The verse by itself tells us there was a plenty of water, so we can assume John was fully covered with water when he was baptized. After reading I was interested in discovering some facts about that Aenon region. By simply “ googling” the name I have found a lot of similar pictures from which we can adjudicate there was enough water to be fully covered.

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Figure 1

Another verse that is related to water baptism, described in Bible says, “ As they traveled along the road, they came to some water. And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him” (Acts: 34-35, New International Version). These verses tell us there were enough water and one person in fact baptized another one. That also shows us that both persons at that moment were in water. Finally, the immersion to and from water symbolizes death and resurrection, the key details of baptism. In evidence to this we also can address to Bible, “ We were therefore buried with him through the baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life”(Romans 6: 4, New International Version)

Sprinkling can't be considered as a process of washing from sins since it doesn't represent a process of washing at all. When I hear about sprinkling as a process in Church, it is associated to me with sanctification. In Christian-Orthodox Church sanctification is a very common process, but usually it is performed to sanctify both animate and inanimate things.

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Figure 2

Still, it is used to baptize people, but the problem is that in Bible we don't find any mentions about baptizing through sprinkling. Sprinkling, if fact can be used for baptizing and we usually do it when we don't have a possibility to submerge a person fully. Earlier only Christian Orthodox Church practiced full emerge while Catholic Church practiced only either sprinkling or effusion. Later, both Orthodox and Catholic churches began practicing sprinkling and effusion. Some Christians even dispute the need of full emerging. As proof of the fact that it was not required and the Apostles usually quoted the familiar quotation from the New Testament, where, supposedly said about baptism first, " was baptized, he and all his family" (Acts. 16: 33, New International Version). However, of the specified text can be only one conclusion - people do not want to save and were baptized immediately. If this is not about what they went down to the river, it does not mean that they did not. Still, if we talking about adults, they have to be fully emerged, but infants can be washed only since full emerging can be dangerous for their lives.

Summing up, the practice of baptizing by sprinkling is possible and widely used nowadays, still the real point of baptizing is to be washed and be emerged into water. Only emerging can symbolize the process of vanishing sins. This process is still held primarily in Orthodox Church. Interesting fact is that Orthodox baptism-holiday is celebrated on January; people usually are fully emerged into ice water, but miraculously they get sick very rarely.

All in all, the process of baptism has a crucial role in life of every Christian person. By baptizing, a person gets closer to God and Heavens. Therefore, baptism is closely connected with the theory of atonement. Namely, baptism is the first step to the atonement and salvation. Baptism is also connected

with another Theologian concept of Trinity, as people are baptized in the name of Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Finally, the concept of baptism is primarily connected the original sin and particularly with the elimination of original sin. The Church should follow the principle of fully emerging people into water as it was done with Jesus. That is why baptism is the process of participation in Christ's Death and Resurrection (" Baptism is forgiveness and cleansing from sins, it is the gift of the Holy Spirit, it is the incorporation into the body of Christ and a sign of God's holy kingdom" (Nevertheless, we also should remember that the baptism by water doesn't save us. In order to be saved, we have to confess and adopt Jesus as our Lord and Savior.