

Analysis of the baptism of emily carr

[Religion](#), [Christianity](#)



The baptism of Emily Carr, as given in her Autobiography, is a telling glimpse into her psyche as an adult. Although fewer than 300 words, the short excerpt paints a colorful picture of Carr as a young child struggling almost unconsciously against the social trappings of her time. This short excerpt reveals Carr's systematic imprisonment by tradition, a social sanctioning of her inferiority, and her rejection of both organized religion and rigid tradition. The memory was unpleasant because it signified an imprisonment within a tradition which categorically defined Carr as inferior and subject to male authority. This is done through the imagery of the Bible with the names, and through the impersonal nature of the baptism at the hands of Dr. Reid. The relationship which Carr might have had, as signified by the fact that she would have willingly sat on his knee, was completely disregarded in favor of a ceremony which reduced Carr to an infant.

The entire scene is weirdly formal, and Carr is dragged along to be prepared, without even being given the agency to wash her own face. What this means is that in that moment, no one in that room saw Carr as a person until she was baptized. Her position of inferiority was further reinforced by the fact that Dr. Reid was only called after her brother was born. She was not important enough to call the parson for her alone, even if this meant that she had to wait four years to be baptized. If we understand the social implications expressed above, this means that Carr was not considered a person for the first four years of her life and that was totally acceptable because she was female. Considering these implications around her baptism, it is no surprise that Carr clearly rejected both the authority of organized religion and the rigidity of her father's traditions.

The last line of the excerpt suggests to us that she does not believe the word of the Bible, even going as far as to question her birth date written within it. It is likely that rejecting the Bible was naturally equated with rejecting the tradition her father attempted to lock her into when “ the covers of the Bible banged, shutting” her into this way of life (Carr). It was not possible to accept one without also accepting the other. Carr’s short recount of her baptism is a fascinating look into the lives of women during the last decade of the nineteenth century.

In just a few short words, she reveals the social trappings of religion and tradition which assigned her to a place of importance even beneath her infant brother. However, even without outright saying it, we can read between the lines to understand that Carr rejected this social position and chose a life beyond what was socially predestined for her.