

The Relationship between Faith and Baptism: A Biblical and Historical Analysis¹

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The debate between credobaptist and paedobaptist is complex and has multiple aspects, both biblical and theological. However, no aspect of the debate is as crucial as the understanding of the relationship between faith and baptism. If faith is a prerequisite for baptism, then the paedobaptist position has some serious issues. But if faith is not a prerequisite for baptism, then one of the most powerful arguments for the credobaptist position is disarmed. Reformed paedobaptist Louis Berkhof clearly defines the importance of this question in the following summary:

The most important objection to infant baptism raised by the Baptists, is that, according to Scripture, baptism is conditioned on an active faith revealing itself in a creditable profession. Now it is perfectly true that the Bible points to faith as a prerequisite for baptism, Mark 16:16; Acts 10:44–48; 16:14, 15, 31, 34. If this means that the recipient of baptism must *in all cases* give manifestations of an active faith before baptism, then children are naturally excluded. But though the Bible clearly indicates that only those adults who believed were baptized, it nowhere lays down the rule that an active faith is absolutely essential for the reception of baptism.²

¹ This article is adapted and abbreviated from the first chapter of Peter Goeman, *The Baptism Debate: Understanding and Evaluating Reformed Infant Baptism* (Raleigh, NC: Sojourner Press, 2023), 7–40. Used with permission.

² Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938), 637.

This quote by Berkhof summarizes the issue well. If faith is an essential requirement for baptism, it is difficult to argue that one can baptize infants. Thus, for most Reformed paedobaptists, faith cannot be a prerequisite for baptism (at least in the case of infant baptism). Notable Reformed theologian, R.C. Sproul, summarizes the issue this way:

The most common argument against infant baptism is that it signifies things that flow from faith, and since infants are not capable of expressing or embracing faith, they should not receive the sign. But if that argument were correct, it would nullify the legitimacy of circumcision in the Old Testament. If we reject infant baptism on the basis of the principle that a sign that involves faith must never be given until after faith is present, we also negate the legitimacy of circumcision in the Old Testament.³

Like Berkhof, Sproul acknowledges that the relationship between faith and baptism is a genuine issue. Due to the importance of this issue to the paedobaptist and credobaptist debate, it should receive more attention than it is often given (both from an exegetical as well as a historical perspective). This essay will argue that faith is intrinsically linked with baptism, both in Scripture as well as church history; thus, believer's baptism (i.e., credobaptism) should be the practice of the church today.

In order to prove this thesis, this essay will begin with a brief survey of biblical texts which demonstrate an essential connection between faith and baptism. We will then explore a selected portion of early historical sources which show that the early church recognized the importance of faith and baptism. Finally, we will explore why there was a historical divorce between faith and baptism during the time of the Reformation.

Faith and Baptism in Scripture

Let us begin by briefly surveying key Scripture passages about baptism to highlight the faith language that is used. Although a thorough analysis of these texts is beyond the scope of this essay, the goal here is to

³ R. C. Sproul, *What Is Baptism?*, The Crucial Questions Series 11 (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 63.

highlight the faith and believing language that is used or implied in these crucial baptism texts.

Baptism in the Book of Acts

The book of Acts often takes a prominent place in the baptism debate because it mentions entire households being baptized, which presumably could have included infants. Although we could certainly benefit by discussing the idea of household baptisms,⁴ here I want to point out the intrinsic link between faith and baptism in the book of Acts.

As the following chart demonstrates, within the baptism passages of Acts, belief and faith are intrinsic to every text except one.⁵ The only exception is the baptism of Lydia and her family recorded in Acts 16:11–15. However, this passage does nothing to discourage us from assuming belief played a prominent role in the narrative.⁶

⁴ Goeman, *The Baptism Debate*, 137–166.

⁵ The words for the verb “believe” (πιστεύω), the noun “faith” (πίστις), and the adjective “faithful” (πιστός) are all cognates in Greek referring to the same broad concept of faith or the working out of faith in belief.

⁶ Although the passage does not say Lydia believed, it does say she asked the apostles to stay at her house if they found her to be faithful to the Lord. One would assume this action implies that she expected them to agree she had showed faith and repentance as evidence of a new life in Christ. It would be difficult to argue that Lydia had not already expressed faith in the message Paul preached prior to her baptism. I am not aware of any paedobaptists who would challenge that point.

Passage	Summary	Biblical Text
2:38, 41	Peter calls the Jewish nation to repent and be baptized and “those who received his word were baptized ... about 3,000 souls.”	“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (v. 38).
8:12–13	Men and women are identified as being baptized after belief. Simon also is said to believe and be baptized (v. 13).	“But when they believed Philip ... they were baptized, both men and women. Even Simon himself believed, and after being baptized he continued with Philip” (v. 12–13a).
8:35–38	Philip explains the gospel, and the eunuch asks to be baptized when he sees water (belief is not mentioned, but seems to be implied—i.e., narrative compression).	“See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?” (v. 37).
10:34–48	Peter proclaims forgiveness of sins to “everyone who believes in him” (v. 43), and after the Gentiles had received the Holy Spirit (implied that they believed), they were baptized.	““Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?’ And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ” (vv. 47–48).
16:11–15	Lydia responds because God “opened her heart” and she and her household are baptized. She then invites the apostles to	“And after she was baptized, and her household as well” (v. 15).

	stay at her house if they deemed her “faithful to the Lord.”	
16:30–34	Paul proclaims the need to “believe in the Lord Jesus” for salvation. The jailer believes, and his entire household rejoices that he had believed (v. 34).	“... and he was baptized at once, he and all his family.... And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God” (vv. 33–34).
18:8	Crispus believed in the Lord (with his entire household also believing). The text implies that he was baptized.	“And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized” (v. 8b).
19:1–7	John’s disciples are baptized as followers of Jesus after being convinced to believe in Jesus.	“John baptized with the baptism of repentance, telling 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” (vv. 4–5).

Table 1. Baptism in the Book of Acts

As we can see by surveying the information on the baptism passages of Acts above, there is certainly a link between faith and baptism, a point even Reformed paedobaptists will acknowledge. However, they will often argue that this emphasis on faith and baptism is because of the nature of “missionary baptisms”—i.e., unbelievers from unbelieving families putting their faith in Christ.⁷ Although this is possible, one also needs to

⁷ Brownson writes, “Here it is important to remember that the earliest church, as witnessed in the New Testament, was in a missionary situation where the dominant pattern was conversion to the faith. It is thus not surprising that the baptism of those who have come to faith is the norm in the book of Acts, and elsewhere in the New Testament to a significant degree. But this fact tells us

account for how the rest of the New Testament talks about the relationship between faith and baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:13

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

This verse powerfully links the concept of baptism and faith through the operation of the Spirit. The context of 1 Corinthians 12 shows that those who drink of one Spirit here in verse 13 are those who say “Jesus is Lord” by the power of the Spirit (12:3). Likewise, these are also the believers who participate in gifts from the Spirit for the good of the church (12:4, 7). Thus, Paul’s argument is that all who are baptized are also participants in the Spirit. In other words, those who are believers have also received the Spirit. Although the term “faith” is not present here in 1 Corinthians 12:13, Pauline theology clearly links the reception of the Spirit with the exercise of faith (Gal 3:2, 5, 14).

The key point of 1 Corinthians 12:13 is that *all* members of the church were baptized into one body and *all* were recipients of the Spirit (a process which only takes place through faith). Although some interpreters would like to distinguish water baptism and Spirit baptism in this passage, Schreiner notes, “Paul himself was not interested in distinguishing them from one another in this verse since both are associated with the transition from the old life to the new.”⁸ Commenting

nothing about infant baptism in itself” (James V. Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism: An Introduction to Baptism in Scripture and the Reformed Tradition* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007], 168).

⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, “Baptism in the Epistles: An Initiation Rite for Believers,” in *Believer’s Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2006), 72. See also, G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1962), 168–69. Supporting the viewpoint that spiritual baptism can be distinguished from water baptism, see Douglas Wilson, *To a Thousand Generations: Infant Baptism—Covenant Mercy for the People of God* (Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 1996), 50–51. Wilson is not primarily discussing 1 Corinthians 12:13, but he provides an argument for

on this verse, the eminent Reformed paedobaptist, John Calvin, states the following:

Here there is a proof brought forward from the effect of baptism. “We are,” says he, “engrafted by baptism into Christ’s body, so that we are by a mutual link bound together as members, and live one and the same life. Hence every one, that would remain in the Church of Christ, must necessarily cultivate this fellowship.” He speaks, however, of the baptism of believers, which is efficacious through the grace of the Spirit, for, in the case of many [i.e., children], baptism is merely in the letter—the symbol without the reality; but believers, along with the sacrament, receive the reality.⁹

Calvin must qualify the text because of his belief in infant baptism. For Calvin, and other Reformed paedobaptists, there are intentional baptisms of some people (i.e., infants) for whom 1 Corinthians 12:13 is not reality. However, the context of 1 Corinthians 12 would seem to indicate that Paul expects all in the church to experience the unity in the Spirit through baptism—a process which in Pauline theology assumes the exercise of faith.

Galatians 3:26–27

For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

As noted in our discussion of 1 Corinthians 12, Paul’s theology in Galatians 3 connects the reception of the Spirit and the exercise of faith (cf. Gal 3:2, 5, 14). But as Paul develops the theme of faith, we see a specific link between the Christian identity as sons of God through faith and baptism.

After identifying the Galatian church as “sons of God” (v. 26), Paul further clarifies the identity of the “sons of God,” in the following verse,

distinguishing between Spirit and water baptism which I ultimately find unconvincing.

⁹ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 406.

“as many of you as were baptized.”¹⁰ In other words, Paul’s argument is that those who have been baptized are sons of God through faith.¹¹

Paul’s terminology of putting on Christ is the language of a believer becoming like Christ (cf. Eph 4:24; Col 3:10).¹² All those who have been baptized into Christ have also put on Christ. If the churches of Galatia baptized infants, could Paul have said that those infants were sons of God through faith, and that those infants had put on Christ? In a similar manner to 1 Corinthians 12:13, Calvin comments on this passage:

But the argument, that, because they have been baptized, they have put on Christ, appears weak; for how far is baptism from being efficacious in all? Is it reasonable that the grace of the Holy Spirit should be so closely linked to an external symbol? Does not the uniform doctrine of Scripture, as well as experience, appear to confute this statement? I answer, it is customary with Paul to treat of the sacraments in two points of view. When he is dealing with hypocrites, in whom the mere symbol awakens pride, he then proclaims loudly the emptiness and worthlessness of the outward symbol, and denounces, in strong terms, their foolish confidence.... When, on the other hand, he addresses believers, who make a proper use of the symbols, he then views them in connexion [sp] with the truth—which they represent.¹³

Again, Calvin must heavily qualify Paul’s point. Calvin argues that baptism is not as efficacious as Paul seems to imply. Although the text seems to assume all who are baptized are recipients of God’s salvific grace, that would certainly be problematic for the Reformed paedobaptist. However, a straight-forward reading of Galatians 3 links baptism and faith. The text states that those who have been baptized are the ones who have put on Christ—and they are the sons of God.

¹⁰ Richard N. Longenecker, *Galatians*, Word Biblical Commentary 41 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 155.

¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 256.

¹² Longenecker, *Galatians*, 156.

¹³ John Calvin and William Pringle, *Commentaries on the Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and Ephesians* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2010), 111.

1 Peter 3:21

Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal (ἐπερώτημα) to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...

This verse “is the nearest approach to a definition of baptism that the NT affords.”¹⁴ Although a full discussion of this verse is not possible here, it is in keeping with our theme to recognize Peter defines baptism as, “an appeal (ἐπερώτημα) to God for a good conscience.” The word “appeal” (ἐπερώτημα) is also translated as “pledge” in some translations. Both translations are possible, and there are good arguments on both sides.¹⁵ However, in either interpretation, we must understand baptism as a volitional outworking of faith. As Schreiner notes, “Whether Peter speaks of an appeal or a pledge, baptism does not save apart from the commitment of the one being baptized.”¹⁶

This verse then is problematic for the Reformed paedobaptist. Schreiner continues, “What is said here does not fit with infant baptism, for infants cannot appeal to God for a good conscience or pledge to maintain a good conscience before God.”¹⁷ Although 1 Peter 3:21 does not mention faith explicitly, the text is loaded with the implicit necessity of faith. Peter’s definition of baptism here assumes the volitional expression of commitment to God. Therefore, this verse is problematic for the paedobaptist since infants cannot express volitional commitment.

Ephesians 4:4–5

There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call—one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

¹⁴ James D. G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* (London: SCM Press, 1970), 219.

¹⁵ For a helpful survey of the evidence, see Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary 37 (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 195–97.

¹⁶ Schreiner, “Baptism in the Epistles,” 70.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 71.

In Ephesians 4:1–3, Paul admonishes the Ephesian believers to walk in unity. Ephesians 4:4–6 then provides the basis for the unity to which Paul calls all believers in 4:1–3.¹⁸ These verses provide short, concise statements that would have been recognized as valid by all the believers in Ephesus.¹⁹ At the head of these statements, Paul identifies the church as one unified body. The labeling of the church as one body naturally leads to the declaration that there is “one Spirit,” since the Spirit is He who incorporates believers into that one body (cf. 1 Cor 12:13).²⁰

In 4:5, Paul declares that there is one Lord (a reference to Christ), one faith, and one baptism. Paul’s reference to one faith and one baptism reveals that his expectation is that all believers have a unified set of beliefs and a unified experience of baptism into Christ. Schreiner rightly states, “They have all shared a common saving experience by being immersed into Christ, and Paul assumes that all believers have been baptized.”²¹

I have included this text in the discussion to highlight the natural combination of faith and baptism. Paul’s discussion in Ephesians 4 seems to presume the audience would recognize that these three phrases go together: one Lord, one faith, one baptism.

Colossians 2:11–12

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made 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.

Reformed paedobaptists often use this passage to argue that baptism has replaced circumcision (an argument I have addressed elsewhere).²² However, I simply want to point out that Paul directly connects faith and baptism here.

¹⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 227–28.

¹⁹ Ibid., 232.

²⁰ Ibid., 233.

²¹ Schreiner, “Baptism in the Epistles,” 71.

²² Goeman, *The Baptism Debate*, 95–136.

Paul explicitly says that believers have “been buried with [Christ] in baptism.” This baptism is further defined as “in which you were also raised with him *through faith*” (emphasis added). Here again, as we have repeatedly seen in the New Testament, we have Paul linking the expression of faith by the believer with the experience of baptism. In the words of Beasley-Murray, “faith is integrated into the baptismal event. In baptism the baptized is raised through faith.”²³

Comparing the New Testament Descriptions of Faith and Baptism

We have observed that the New Testament regularly links faith and baptism together. This is clear from the examples in Acts and in Paul’s descriptions of baptism in the Epistles. However, looking at the specific baptism texts is not the only way to show that faith and baptism are linked.

Another support for the link between baptism and faith can be seen by comparing and contrasting the descriptions of faith and baptism. Specifically, when we compare those gifts that God gives to those who exercise faith with the gifts He gives to those who are baptized, we see strong similarities. In other words, those gifts which are promised through faith are also promised through baptism. Note the similarities displayed in the following chart.²⁴

Gift of God	Faith	Baptism
Forgiveness	Rom 4:5–8; 1 John 1:9	Acts 2:38; 22:16
Justification	Rom 3–5 (e.g., 3:28); Gal 2–3 (e.g., 3:11)	1 Cor 6:11
Union with Christ	Eph 3:17	Gal 3:27; Rom 6:3, 5, 8

²³ Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 154.

²⁴ This chart is taken without edit from Anthony R. Cross, “Faith-Baptism: The Key to an Evangelical Baptismal Sacramentalism,” in *Truth That Never Dies*, ed. Nigel G. Wright (Cambridge, UK: The Lutterworth Press, 2014), 35. Cross composes this chart to summarize the data presented by G. R. Beasley-Murray.

Being crucified with Christ	Gal 2:19–20	Rom 6:2–11 (esp. 3–4, 6)
Death and Resurrection	Gal 2:19–20	Rom 6:2–11 (esp. 3–4, 5–6 and 8; Col 2:12)
Sonship	John 1:12	Gal 3:26–27
Holy Spirit	Gal 3:2–5, 13–14	Acts 2:38; 1 Cor 12:13
Entry in the church	Acts 5:14; Gal 3:6–7	Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 12:13
Regeneration and life	John 3:14–16; 20:31	Titus 3:5; John 3:5
The kingdom and eternal life	Mark 10:15; John 3:14–16	1 Cor 6:9–11; Acts 22:16
Salvation	Rom 1:16; John 3:16	1 Peter 3:21

Table 2. The Gifts Promised to Faith and Baptism

As the chart above illustrates, faith and baptism are so connected that you can talk about them almost interchangeably. Some paedobaptists even acknowledge this point. For example, paedobaptist James Brownson writes:

Scripture repeatedly links baptism and faith, minimizing neither faith nor the importance of baptism. Indeed, almost all the blessings that Scripture speaks of as flowing from faith are also spoken of as flowing from baptism, including cleansing, justification, union with Christ, adoption, membership in the body of Christ, giving of the Holy Spirit, and the inheritance of the Kingdom of God.²⁵

In the New Testament, it is unquestionably the default to talk about baptism and faith in the same breath. They are intrinsically linked in the narratives of Acts, as well as in the Epistles. The church has historically recognized this essential link between faith and baptism. It was not until the Reformation that this connection between faith and baptism was

²⁵ Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism*, 88.

seriously challenged. Thus, we now turn to a brief survey of church history to highlight the early church's view of faith and baptism.

Faith and Baptism in the Early Church

As the above section showed, the New Testament consistently links faith and baptism together. This seems to be the understanding of the early church as well. Admittedly, the evidence on baptism in the early church is quite varied. Instruction on clothing, procedures, catechisms, and motivations for baptisms sometimes differ from source to source. Yet, there is a strong and outspoken unity on faith and baptism in early church writings.

The goal of this section is to briefly address a few sources to highlight the fact that the early church viewed faith as an integral part of the baptism process. Some of the following sources cited are paedobaptists. Although many of these paedobaptists did not explain how infant baptism relates to the belief that faith is integral to baptism, they still provide evidence that the early church did indeed consider faith and baptism to be linked.

Mark 16:15–16

And he said to them, “Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”

I did not include this text in the previous section on Scripture and faith because I am not convinced that Mark 16:15–16 is original to Mark.²⁶ Although present in most English translations, these verses are part of the longer ending of Mark (16:9–20), which many scholars believe was a later addition to the Gospel, which originally ended at 16:8.²⁷

²⁶ In this, I agree with Daniel M. Doriani, “Matthew 28:18–20 and the Institution of Baptism,” in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003), 43–47. However, Doriani does not think the text contributes to our understanding of baptism at all, while I would say it is a very early witness of at least some in the church linking faith and baptism.

²⁷ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 499.

However, even if those verses are not original to Mark, this longer ending of Mark shows an early Christian understanding of the link between faith and baptism. Edwards notes that this ending must be dated to at least the very beginning of the second century.²⁸ Thus, although it is unlikely that this text was originally part of Mark's Gospel, it is a very early testimony of what the church believed about faith and baptism.

In Mark 16:16, the phrase, "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved," indicates that the same individual is in view. In other words, to be saved one must have believed *and* have been baptized (cf. Acts 2:38). As Collins notes, "The linking of believing and being baptized reflects widespread practice in the communities of those who accepted Jesus as the messiah or as Lord."²⁹ Mark 16:16 provides a very early witness of the link between faith and baptism.

Didache 7:1, 4

Concerning baptism, baptize in this way: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water.... Prior to baptism, let the one who baptizes and the baptizand fast, and others if they are able. Instruct the baptizand to fast one or two days beforehand.³⁰

The *Didache* is one of the earliest Christian sources we have. Although some date its composition to as early as 50 AD, it was likely written between 80 and 110 AD.³¹ The *Didache* is a valuable resource and witness to early church life, not only due to its early date but also because it reads as a manual to guide church function.

²⁸ "Although the longer ending is clearly secondary, it is nevertheless very old. The earliest witnesses to the longer ending come from the *Epistula Apostolorum* 9–10 (c. 145), perhaps Justin Martyr (*Apol.* 1.45; c. 155), Tatian's *Diatessaron* (c. 170), and Irenaeus (*Adv. Haer.* 3.9–12; c. 180)" (Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 499).

²⁹ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary on the Gospel of Mark*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 810.

³⁰ Translation from Shawn J. Wilhite, *The Didache: A Commentary* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2019), xxxvii.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 18–22.

Although the entire section on baptism is worth studying in its entirety (*Didache* 7:1–4), the pertinent observation for us is that the manual clearly expects a Christian to have come to grips with the gravity of baptism before partaking in it. Although the *Didache* does not explicitly mention faith or belief in the section on baptism, clearly faith was an essential part of the community experience (cf. 10:2; 16:2, 5). The recitation and fasting requirements expected of the baptismal candidate assume a profession of faith.

According to the *Didache*, the candidate for baptism was first required to take part in a baptismal catechism (7:1, “Having first recited all these things...”). Wilhite argues that the first six chapters of the *Didache* are most likely the material that the baptismal candidate would have recited.³² In addition to the catechismal recitation, the *Didache* instructs the candidate to “fast beforehand for one or two days.” These details assume we are talking about someone who is volitionally involved in exercising his faith through baptism.

Still, it is possible for one to raise the objection that the *Didache* could have only adult converts in mind. However, it is, in the words of Jewett, “highly implausible” that the *Didache*, with all of its concern for church function, would be produced by a community of early paedobaptists “who just happen to say nothing” about the procedures of infant baptism.³³

Epistle of Barnabas, 11:8, 11

Ye perceive how He pointed out the water and the cross at the same time. For this is the meaning; Blessed are they that set their hope on the cross, and go down into the water.... This He saith, because we go down into the water laden with sins and filth, and rise up from it bearing fruit in the heart, resting our fear and hope on Jesus in the spirit. *And whosoever shall eat of these shall live for ever*; He meaneth this; whosoever, saith He, shall hear these things spoken and shall believe, shall live for ever.³⁴

³² Ibid., 166–69.

³³ Paul K. Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace: An Appraisal of the Argument That as Infants Were Once Circumcised, so They Should Now Be Baptized* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 40–41.

³⁴ Joseph Barber Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891), 280.

The *Epistle of Barnabas* is another well-known Christian work from the end of the first century or the beginning of the second century.³⁵ Although *Barnabas* is most well-known for its allegorical and typological interpretations, it also makes a brief foray into the subject of baptism. *Barnabas* notes that those who “set their hope on the cross” also “go down into the water.” He also concludes that these individuals “hear these things” and “believe,” securing their eternal life. Thus, we have another testimony of the early church linking volitional belief and baptism.

Aristides, The Apology of Aristides, 15

Further, if one or other of them have bondmen and bondwomen or children, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction.³⁶

Aristides was an early Christian apologist who wrote from Athens. He defended and explained Christianity to Emperor Hadrian around 124 AD.³⁷ In his lengthy explanation of who the Christians are, Aristides notes how Christians persuade their servants and children to become

³⁵ Treat notes, “Since Barnabas 16:3 refers to the destruction of the temple, Barnabas must be written after 70CE. It must be written before its first indisputable use in Clement of Alexandria, ca. 190. Since 16:4 expects the temple to be rebuilt, it was most likely written before Hadrian built a Roman temple on the site ca. 135” (Jay Curry Treat, “Barnabas, Epistle Of,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman [New York: Doubleday, 1992], 613).

³⁶ Aristides of Athens, “The Apology of Aristides,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 9, *The Gospel of Peter, the Diatessaron of Tatian, the Apocalypse of Peter, the Visio Pauli, the Apocalypses of the Virgil and Sedrach, the Testament of Abraham, the Acts of Xanthippe and Polyxena, the Narrative of Zosimus, the Apology of Aristides, the Epistles of Clement (Complete Text), Origen’s Commentary on John, Books I–X, and Commentary on Matthew, Books I, II, and X–XIV*, ed. Allan Menzies, trans. D. M. Kay (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1897), 277.

³⁷ Robert M. Grant, “Aristides,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 1, ed. David Noel Freedman, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 382.

Christians. Although he does not mention baptism in this text, it is appropriate to include since Aristides explains the relationship between Christians and their children. Aristides says that, in the Christian community, Christians seek to persuade their slaves and their children to become Christians.

The fact that Aristides explicitly says that Christians seek to persuade bondmen, bondwomen, and children is a soft argument for believer's baptism. Only after a slave or a child was persuaded to become a Christian were they then embraced as "brethren without distinction." Before that time, the slaves and children were presumably *not* treated as brethren.

Aristides does not provide direct evidence of a link between faith and baptism. Nevertheless, this text shows that the Christian community expected children to exercise faith in Christ before they were considered "brethren without distinction." This is contrary to the practice of some Reformed paedobaptists who view children as full-fledged Christians from birth, even prior to a confession of faith.³⁸

Justin Martyr, 1st Apology, LXI

As many as are persuaded and believe that what we teach and say is true, and undertake to be able to live accordingly, are instructed to pray and to entreat God with fasting, for the remission of their sins that are past, we praying and fasting with them. Then they are brought by us where there is water, and are regenerated in the same manner in which we were ourselves regenerated.³⁹

Justin Martyr is one of the most well-known second century church fathers. Justin was likely the most significant apologist for Christianity

³⁸ For example, Sproul writes, "But our assumption, based on the covenant promises of God, is that the child is in, all the way in, until he or she gives contrary evidence and is eventually excommunicated" (R. C. Sproul Jr., "In Jesus' Name, Amen," in *The Case for Covenantal Infant Baptism*, ed. Gregg Strawbridge [Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2003], 307–8).

³⁹ Justin Martyr, "The First Apology of Justin," in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 1, *The Apostolic Fathers with Justin Martyr and Irenaeus*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 183.

in the second century until his death around 165 AD.⁴⁰ In his explanation about baptism, after individuals are persuaded and come to believe the truth, Justin instructs them to pray and fast, after which time they are brought to the waters of baptism. Clearly faith and baptism are related in Justin's defense of baptism. We also observe again the early church practice of catechizing individuals *before* baptism (cf. *Didache* 7:1).

Tertullian, On Repentance, VI

That *baptismal* washing is a sealing of faith, which faith is begun and is commended by the faith of repentance. We are not washed *in order that we may cease sinning*, but *because we have ceased*, since in *heart* we have *been* bathed already.⁴¹

Tertullian (ca. 160–225AD) has been called the father of Latin Theology and wrote prolifically in the Latin language on many theological subjects. As is clear from the above quote, Tertullian clearly emphasizes a strong connection between faith and baptism. He even goes so far as to describe baptism as the “sealing of faith.” He also links baptism with the “faith of repentance.”

Tertullian is best known in baptism debates because he is regarded as the first undisputed evidence that infant baptism was being practiced in the early third century.⁴² In his extensive treatise on baptism, which he wrote between 200 and 206 AD,⁴³ Tertullian acknowledged the practice of infant baptism, but argued that it was preferable to wait to baptize children until they “know how to ‘ask’ for salvation.” He writes:

And so, according to the circumstances and disposition, and even age, of each individual, the delay of baptism is preferable; principally,

⁴⁰ Robert M. Grant, “Justin Martyr,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, vol. 3, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1133–34.

⁴¹ Tertullian, “On Repentance,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 662.

⁴² Peter 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), 246.

⁴³ Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 20.

however, in the case of little children.... Let them “come,” then, while they are growing up; let them “come” while they are learning, while they are learning whither to come; let them become Christians when they have become able to know Christ.... Let them know how to “ask” for salvation, that you may seem (at least) to have given “to him that asketh.” ... If any understand the weighty import of baptism, they will fear its reception more than its delay: sound faith is secure of salvation.⁴⁴

In this passage Tertullian argues that it is preferable to delay baptism until the candidate understands the “weighty import of baptism.” Tertullian goes on to argue, “sound faith is secure of salvation.” Although some implications of Tertullian’s statements can be debated, the main point is obvious. In the words of Jewett, “Tertullian’s fundamental point is clear enough: it is better to wait until one is ready to live what he professes in baptism than to repudiate that profession by subsequent wickedness of life.”⁴⁵ So, although Tertullian acknowledges some churches practicing infant baptism, he preferred to connect a “sound faith” with the process of baptism.

Cyprian, Epistle LXXV (§12)

In the sacraments of salvation, when necessity compels, and God bestows His mercy, the divine methods confer the whole benefit on believers; nor ought it to trouble any one that sick people seem to be sprinkled or effused, when they obtain the Lord’s grace.... Whence it appears that the sprinkling also of water prevails equally with the washing of salvation; and that when this is done in the Church, where the faith both of receiver and giver is sound, all things hold and may be consummated and perfected by the majesty of the Lord and by the truth of faith.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Tertullian, “On Baptism,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, *Latin Christianity: Its Founder, Tertullian*, ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. S. Thelwall (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1885), 678.

⁴⁵ Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 22.

⁴⁶ Cyprian of Carthage, “The Epistles of Cyprian,” in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 5, *Fathers of the Third Century: Hippolytus, Cyprian, Novatian, Appendix*,

Cyprian of Carthage (200–258 AD) overlapped with Tertullian. They were even from the same city! Cyprian undoubtedly supported the practice of infant baptism. Around 251 or 253 AD, Cyprian was involved with a church council that discussed whether infant baptism should be delayed until the eighth day.⁴⁷ One wonders why, if infant baptism was the regular practice of the church since its inception, the church in the third century still had not answered the basic question of when an infant should be baptized. Regardless, it is enough to note that Cyprian gives his answer to Fidus in *Epistle LVIII*, showing clear support for the baptism of infants.

For our purposes, we note that in the above quote (*Epistle LXXV*) Cyprian argues that faith of both the candidate for baptism *and* the one who baptizes is important. For example, in the previous section (§11) he notes, “But if heretics and schismatics baptized without have not the Holy Spirit, and therefore hands are imposed on them among us, that *here* may be received what *there* neither is nor can be given; it is plain, also, that remission of sins cannot be given by those who, it is certain, have not the Holy Spirit.”⁴⁸ To summarize, Cyprian argues that if a heretic baptizes someone, that individual will not receive the Holy Spirit, nor the forgiveness of sins! That leads to Cyprian’s statement a few lines later, that true baptism is, “where the faith both of receiver and giver is sound.” Unfortunately, Cyprian does not describe how faith and infant baptism go together. However, Cyprian clearly believes faith is essentially related to baptism—both for the baptismal candidate and the one baptizing.

Basil, On the Holy Spirit, XII

Faith and baptism are two kindred and inseparable ways of salvation: faith is perfected through baptism, baptism is established through faith, and both are completed by the same names. For as we believe in the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost, so are we also baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: first

ed. Alexander Roberts, James Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe, trans. Robert Ernest Wallis (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1886), 401.

⁴⁷ Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 18.

⁴⁸ Cyprian of Carthage, “The Epistles of Cyprian,” 400.

comes the confession, introducing us to salvation, and baptism follows, setting the seal upon our assent.⁴⁹

Basil, the first of the three major Cappadocian theologians (Basil, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory of Nazianzus), served as bishop of Caesarea from 370 to 379 AD. As the above quote illustrates, Basil strongly emphasized the connection between faith and baptism, calling them inseparable. Furthermore, Basil emphasized that a confession of faith was a prerequisite to baptism.

Gregory of Nyssa, On the Baptism of Christ: A Sermon for the Day of the Lights

And we in receiving Baptism, in imitation of our Lord and Teacher and Guide, are not indeed buried in the earth (for this is the shelter of the body that is entirely dead, covering the infirmity and decay of our nature), but coming to the element akin to earth, to water, we conceal ourselves in that as the Saviour did in the earth: and by doing this thrice we represent for ourselves that grace of the Resurrection which was wrought in three days: and this we do, not receiving the sacrament in silence, but while there are spoken over us the Names of the Three Sacred Persons on Whom we believed, in Whom we also hope, from Whom comes to us both the fact of our present and the fact of our future existence.⁵⁰

Gregory, brother of Basil, was bishop of Nyssa from 372 until his death (ca. 395 AD).⁵¹ Baptists often cite Gregory as evidence that immersion was practiced in the early church because of his description of

⁴⁹ Basil of Caesarea, "The Book of Saint Basil on the Spirit," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, vol. 8, *St. Basil: Letters and Select Works*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Blomfield Jackson (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1895), 18.

⁵⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Baptism of Christ," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, vol. 5, *Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc.*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Henry Austin Wilson (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893), 520.

⁵¹ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 603.

baptism being an imitation of being buried in the earth and concealed by the water “as the Saviour did in the earth.”

It is important to note here that Gregory gave significant prominence to faith as a necessity for baptism. Besides his description quoted above, we read that those who are baptized have believed in the “Three Sacred Persons.” In another of his writings, *The Great Catechism* (Ch XXXIII), Gregory stated that baptism required prayer, the invocation of heavenly grace, water, and faith.⁵² We find a similar statement in his work, *Against Those Who Defer Baptism*, “Every place belongs to the Master, and all water is suitable for the use of baptism, if only it finds faith in the one receiving it and the blessing of the priest who sanctifies it.”⁵³ For Gregory of Nyssa, it was like his brother Basil had said, “Faith and baptism are two kindred and inseparable ways of salvation.”

Gregory of Nazianzus

Gregory of Nazianzus, friend of Basil, is the third of the Cappadocian fathers. He served a brief tenure as bishop of Constantinople (379–381 AD) and was largely in agreement theologically with Basil and Gregory of Nyssa. When encouraging others to embrace baptism, like his fellow Cappadocian leaders, he emphasized the confession of faith which precedes baptism: “Seize the opportunity; rejoice greatly in the blessing; and having spoken be baptized; and having been baptized be saved.”⁵⁴

At this point it is helpful to point out that each of the three major Cappadocian fathers emphasized faith in relationship to baptism.

⁵² Gregory of Nyssa, “The Great Catechism,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, vol. 5, Gregory of Nyssa: Dogmatic Treatises, Etc., ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. William Moore (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1893), 501.

⁵³ Jacques-Paul Migne, ed., *Patrologia Graeca* [= *Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*] (Paris, 1863), 46:421D, cited in Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 607.

⁵⁴ Gregory Nazianzen, “Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen,” in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, Second Series*, vol. 7, *S. Cyril of Jerusalem, S. Gregory Nazianzen*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, trans. Charles Gordon Browne and James Edward Swallow (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 369.

Ferguson notes that they each talk about sickbed baptisms and they each highlight the need to make a proclamation of faith before baptism.⁵⁵

Few early church sources before Augustine deal with the potential problem of infant baptism and the relationship of faith. Gregory of Nazianzus is one of those few exceptions. Regarding the infant baptism happening during his day, he advises the following:

What have you to say about those who are still children, and conscious neither of the loss nor of the grace? Are we to baptize them too? Certainly, if any danger presses. For it is better that they should be unconsciously sanctified than that they should depart unsealed and uninitiated....

But in respect of others [where there is no danger] I give my advice to wait till the end of the third year, or a little more or less, when they may be able to listen and to answer something about the Sacrament; that, even though they do not perfectly understand it, yet at any rate they may know the outlines; and then to sanctify them in soul and body with the great sacrament of our consecration. For this is how the matter stands; at that time they begin to be responsible for their lives, when reason is matured, and they learn the mystery of life (for of sins of ignorance owing to their tender years they have no account to give), and it is far more profitable on all accounts to be fortified by the Font, because of the sudden assaults of danger that befall us, stronger than our helpers.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Ferguson writes, "All of these accounts of sickbed baptism emphasize the importance of the candidate being able to speak the words of faith. This emphasis accords with the summaries of the baptismal process given by each preacher: being taught, having faith in the heart, and receiving the seal of the Spirit (Basil); faith and baptism (the Nyssene); 'having spoken, be baptized; and being baptized, be saved' (Nazianzen)" (Everett Ferguson, "Exhortations to Baptism in the Cappadocians," in *The Early Church at Work and Worship, Volume 2: Catechesis, Baptism, Eschatology, and Martyrdom* [London: James Clarke, 2014], 105).

⁵⁶ Gregory Nazianzen, "Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen," 370.

Like other early church sources, Gregory acknowledges the practice of infant baptism at the end of the fourth century. However, it seems noteworthy that Gregory teaches that it is best to wait to baptize children until they can understand the significance of baptism and “begin to be responsible for their lives.” Gregory of Nazianzus seems to attempt some sort of balancing act by saying infant baptism is allowable, but that it should only be used in situations of danger (i.e., the child is about to die). Gregory prefers that children be able to confess their own faith at the time of their baptism.

Summary of the Early Church

Usually when interpreters analyze the historical evidence of the early church, it is in search of the first references to paedobaptism in order to find out whether infant baptism was the norm or the exception. Although such an endeavor is a worthwhile project,⁵⁷ I have focused this survey on the early church teaching that baptism and faith were fundamentally related. The sources have shown that we can easily establish this point.

Some may sweep away the biblical and early church evidence by claiming most of these passages qualify as “missionary baptisms”—i.e., they are focused on the salvation of an individual from a non-Christian family. However, some of these passages, especially the texts from Tertullian and Gregory of Nazianzus, suggest waiting to baptize children so that the child might know what he is doing. In the words of Gregory, it is preferable that the children “may be able to listen and to answer something about the Sacrament.” Similarly, one of the earliest testimonies we have of a Christian mindset is that of *Aristides*, who mentions that it was a common practice for early Christians to persuade their children to become Christians prior to welcoming them as brethren.

As the previous material illustrates, both the New Testament and the early church clearly testify that faith was central to the baptismal process. However, apparently because of the prevalence of infant baptism from at least the third century on, theologians sensed the need to talk about the relationship between faith and paedobaptism. Thus, we

⁵⁷ See, for example, Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 199–816; Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 13–45.

find a full discussion of this issue during the fifth century in the writings of Augustine.

Augustine and the Medieval Catholic Church

Augustine is perhaps the most well-known church theologian of all time. It is difficult to overstate the effect of Augustine on theology and western thought. Augustine made vast contributions on the issues of election, predestination, free will, and a myriad of other subjects. The question of how faith and infant baptism relate was also an issue that Augustine deemed important enough to address.

In his writings on baptism, after explaining that baptism belongs to those who repent of their sins, Augustine addresses the obvious problem of *what* infants are repenting *from*. He writes, "Now, inasmuch as infants are not held bound by any sins of their own actual life, it is the guilt of original sin which is healed in them by the grace of Him who saves them by the laver of regeneration."⁵⁸ So, for Augustine, although infants have committed no sin, they must repent of original sin that was passed down through Adam. By being baptized, the infant secures justification in the presence of God. Augustine states it this way:

If, however, the infant departs from the present life after he has received baptism, the guilt in which he was involved by original sin being done away, he shall be made perfect in that light of truth, which, remaining unchangeable for evermore, illumines the justified in the presence of their Creator. For sins alone separate between men and God; and these are done away by Christ's grace, through whom, as Mediator, we are reconciled, when He justifies the ungodly.⁵⁹

Obviously, someone could raise the objection that it is not really repentance if infants have no volitional ability to confess and forsake sin on their own. To this Augustine replies:

⁵⁸ Augustine of Hippo, "A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series*, vol. 5, *Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Peter Holmes (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 24.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Some one will say: How then are mere infants called to repentance? How can such as they repent of anything? The answer to this is: If they must not be called penitents because they have not the sense of repenting, neither must they be called believers, because they likewise have not the sense of believing. But if they are rightly called believers, because they in a certain sense profess faith by the words of their parents, why are they not also held to be before that penitents when they are shown to renounce the devil and this world by the profession again of the same parents?⁶⁰

We must take careful note of Augustine's point here. His argument presumes the necessity of belief and repentance in baptism. But, since the child is incapable, Augustine argues that the parent's words of faith and penitence are attributed to the child. Theologically, this phenomenon is called *fides aliena*, the faith of others (or, an alien faith). Elsewhere Augustine clarified that this concept only applied to infants and not to others who could confess their own faith.

Therefore, when others take the vows for [infants], that the celebration of the sacrament may be complete in their behalf, it is unquestionably of avail for their dedication to God, because they cannot answer for themselves. But if another were to answer for one who could answer for himself, it would not be of the same avail. In accordance with which rule, we find in the gospel what strikes every one as natural when he reads it, "He is of age, he shall speak for himself."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Augustine of Hippo, "A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series*, vol. 5, *Saint Augustine: Anti-Pelagian Writings*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. Peter Holmes (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 24.

⁶¹ Augustine of Hippo, "On Baptism, against the Donatists," in *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, First Series*, vol. 4, *St. Augustin: The Writings against the Manichaeans and against the Donatists*, ed. Philip Schaff, trans. J. R. King (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Company, 1887), 462.

Unsurprisingly, the concept of *fides aliena* prompted some significant debate among theologians. Although *fides aliena* solves the problem of how infant baptism relates to faith, numerous other difficulties arise because of this view. For example, who is it that believes on behalf of the infant?

If *fides aliena* solves the problem of the infant's lack of faith, it opens up a new question: who actually does the believing? The early scholastics reckoned with the possibility that parents or sponsors may not really believe. In this case, the act of believing devolves upon the church as a whole, as Augustine had said.⁶² But what if the entire church was in error? Then, said the early scholastics, it is the faith of the *ecclesia triumphans*, the church already in heaven, that suffices. But the church triumphant does not need faith; how can it "believe"? Answer: its faith is on deposit in the treasury of merits. So the theologians spun out the strands that came from the Pandora's box that Augustine had opened.⁶³

The problematic theological consequences of Augustine's *fides aliena* led to an alternative viewpoint, called *fides infusa baptisme*, a special "virtue or power infused by baptism."⁶⁴ Continuing with the attempt to resolve the connection of faith and infant baptism, medieval thinkers like Peter Lombard proposed the idea that the church conferred faith on the infant

⁶² "And that this takes place in the case of infants, through the sacrament of baptism, is not doubted by mother Church, which uses for them the heart and mouth of a mother, that they may be imbued with the sacred mysteries, seeing that they cannot as yet with their own heart 'believe unto righteousness,' nor with their own mouth make 'confession unto salvation'" (Augustine of Hippo, "A Treatise on the Merits and Forgiveness of Sins, and on the Baptism of Infants," 30).

⁶³ Jonathan H. Rainbow, "'Confessor Baptism': The Baptismal Doctrine of the Early Anabaptists," in *Believer's Baptism: Sign of the New Covenant in Christ*, ed. Thomas R. Schreiner and Shawn D. Wright, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology (Nashville, TN: B & H Academic, 2006), 191.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

through the act of baptism.⁶⁵ This viewpoint found significant support among theologians. Thomas Aquinas, the great medieval theologian, seemed to support this viewpoint. In his *Summa Theologiae*, Aquinas argued that “children believe, not by their own act, but by the faith of the Church, which is applied to them: by the power of which faith, grace and virtues are bestowed on them” (*Summa Theologiae*, Q 69, A 6).

Although *fides infusa* became a popular view in the Catholic Church, like its predecessor *fides aliena* it suffered from problems. The most obvious problem of *fides infusa* was that “faith cannot be both the prerequisite for baptism and the gift bestowed by baptism.”⁶⁶

It is not my goal to fully evaluate the development of *fides aliena* or *fides infusa* here. Rather, my goal is to make the simple point that, from Augustine through the medieval period, the prevailing opinion was that faith somehow related to baptism. Even in infant baptism, theologians embraced the idea that faith was integral to the baptism process.

Although theologians could easily account for the exercise of volitional faith prior to baptism in adult converts, they heavily debated the relationship between faith and infant baptism. This debate led to two prevailing views—neither of which denied the relationship between faith and baptism, but only tried to make sense of it. It was into the world of *fides aliena* and *fides infusa* that Martin Luther was born. Luther added another viewpoint of how faith and infant baptism could relate.

Luther and Individual Faith⁶⁷

Martin Luther (1483–1546) is one of the most well-known figures of the Reformation. Importantly, he pointed out the theological deviation of the Roman Catholic Church and helped get the Bible into the hands of the German-speaking people. Although Luther broke away from the Roman Catholic Church in many key areas (one such area being

⁶⁵ Ibid. Rainbow cites A. M. Landgraf, *Dogmengeschichte der Frühscholastik, Dritter Teil: Die Lehre von den Sakramenten* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1954), 323, as a scholar who claims *fides infusa* was the “distinctive contribution” of scholastic thought concerning the relationship between faith and baptism.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Much of the information on Luther’s early life was brought to my attention by Rainbow, “Confessor Baptism,” 192–94.

justification by faith alone),⁶⁸ he largely embraced Rome's view of infant baptism.⁶⁹ However, one of the major differences in Luther's view of baptism, including infant baptism, was the key ingredient of individual faith—at least initially.

In 1520, Luther spoke adamantly about the connection between faith and baptism. He noted, "For unless faith is present or is conferred in baptism, baptism will profit us nothing."⁷⁰ The belief that faith was a volitional expression of the individual in baptism was essential to Luther's theology of baptism. Thus, in contrast to the traditional *fides aliena* or *fides infusa* position, Luther argued for *fides propria*, the necessity of one's own expression of faith. The need for individual and personal faith was one of the most significant themes in Luther's theology and extended beyond baptism to apply to other areas, including the mass.⁷¹

Luther saw no problem with *fides infantium*, an infant having his own faith. In the early 1520s, Luther wrote in defense of infant baptism with the concrete statement, "The infants themselves believe in baptism, and

⁶⁸ For an interesting analysis of how Luther's view of baptism seems to compromise his doctrine of *sola fide*, see D. Patrick Ramsey, "Sola Fide Compromised? Martin Luther and the Doctrine of Baptism," *Themelios* 34, no. 2 (2009): 179–93.

⁶⁹ Some have argued that Luther's similarity to Rome on the issue of baptism being a work of regeneration conflicts with his emphasis on justification by faith alone. For example, see Ramsey, "Sola Fide Compromised?," 179–93.

⁷⁰ Martin Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520," in *Luther's Works: Volume 36 Word and Sacrament II*, trans. A. T. W. Steinhäuser, Frederick C. Ahrens, and Abdel Ross Wentz (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1959), 59. Luther later writes, "For the power of baptism depends not so much on the faith or use of the one who confers it as on the faith or use of the one who receives it" (Luther, "The Babylonian Captivity of the Church, 1520," 64).

⁷¹ Luther writes, "No one can observe or hear mass for another, but each one for himself alone" (Martin Luther, "A Treatise on the New Testament, That Is, the Holy Mass, 1520," in *Luther's Works: Volume 35 Word and Sacrament I*, trans. Jeremiah J. Schindel and E. Theodore Bachmann [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1960], 94).

have their own faith.”⁷² In defending this idea to the Bohemian Brethren, Luther pointed to the baptismal liturgy, where the minister asks whether the infant believes. In the liturgy, the sponsor answers in the affirmative, and Luther points out that if the child doesn’t believe, then the answer would be a lie.⁷³ Thus, for Luther it was important to acknowledge that the child really is expressing faith at the time of baptism. Although individual faith for the infant was essential to Luther initially, things changed when he began to argue with the Anabaptists.

Luther and the Anabaptist Movement

The Reformation cry of *ad fontes* (to the sources) sparked a renewed assessment of traditional doctrines through the lens of *sola scriptura* (scripture alone). The doctrines of salvation, the papacy, indulgences, and the mass all received critical evaluation through the lens of Scripture. But it did not stop there. Those who were referred to by their detractors as the Anabaptists critically evaluated paedobaptism as a non-biblical practice. Unsurprisingly, one of the chief arguments they used was that faith was linked with baptism in Scripture; thus, how could an infant exercise faith?

It is difficult to understate the disdain with which Luther and other Reformers viewed the Anabaptists.⁷⁴ The Reformers viewed the Anabaptists as troublemakers who were impeding God’s work in the church. But because the Anabaptists were using arguments that persuaded many Christians, they needed to be addressed.

In 1528, Luther took up the challenge to defend paedobaptism against the Anabaptists. In defending paedobaptism against the

⁷² Quoted in Karl Brinkel, *Die Lehre Luthers von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufe* (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), 41. Die kinder ynn der tauffe selb glauben und eygen glauben haben.

⁷³ Brinkel, *Die Lehre Luthers*, 44. Darumb mus es auch selbs gleuben, oder die paten müssen liegen, wenn sie sagen an seyner stat, “Ich gleube.”

⁷⁴ For example, see Larry D. Pettegrew, “Israel and the Dark Side of the Reformation,” in *Forsaking Israel: How It Happened and Why It Matters*, 2nd ed. (The Woodlands, TX: Kress Biblical Resources, 2021), 75–106; Leonard Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964).

Anabaptists, Luther argued differently than he had in the early 1520s.⁷⁵ Although Luther had argued earlier that faith had an essential place in baptism, when writing against the Anabaptists, Luther notes, “Whoever bases baptism on the faith of the one to be baptized can never baptize anyone.”⁷⁶ A little while later, Luther also says, “Since there is no difference in baptism whether lack of faith precedes or follows, baptism doesn’t depend on faith.”⁷⁷ And perhaps most shocking of all, Luther writes, “Even if they could establish that children are without faith when they are baptized, it would make no difference to me.”⁷⁸

It is difficult to say whether Luther’s baptismal theology changed dramatically or he simply was overemphasizing a point in his rhetoric against the Anabaptists.⁷⁹ If he was claiming faith had no relationship to baptism, then he would not only be undergoing a massive change of personal theology but also departing from the historic position of the church, including the teaching of theological giants like Augustine and Aquinas. In any case, Luther’s writing on faith and baptism changed because of pressure from the Anabaptists. They forced him to address the issue of faith and baptism concerning infants, and signs of inconsistency began to show in his arguments. Luther was not the only Reformer who had to deal with this Anabaptist argument.

Ulrich Zwingli and the Separation of Faith and Baptism

The conflict that Luther experienced in Germany with the Anabaptists also existed elsewhere. In Zurich, Ulrich Zwingli apparently started out as an ally of the Anabaptist movement, rejecting infant baptism.⁸⁰ Early on in his ministry, Zwingli noted his distaste for

⁷⁵ Rainbow, “Confessor Baptism,” 195.

⁷⁶ Martin Luther, “Concerning Rebaptism, 1528,” in *Luther’s Works: Volume 40 Church and Ministry II*, trans. Conrad Bergendoff (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1958), 240.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 248.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 246.

⁷⁹ Rainbow assumes that “Concerning Rebaptism” was “not a substantial shift” in Luther’s baptismal theology, but rather simply a less-than-careful response to the Anabaptist movement (Rainbow, “Confessor Baptism,” 196).

⁸⁰ Pettegrew, “Israel and the Dark Side of the Reformation,” 82. Rainbow cites the personal testimony of Balthasar Hubmaier, “Ein Gespräch (1526),” in

practicing infant baptism: “Nothing grieves me more than that at the present I have to baptize children, for I know it ought not to be done.”⁸¹ Elsewhere, Zwingli writes, “I leave baptism untouched, I call it neither right nor wrong; if we were to baptize as Christ instituted it then we would not baptize any person until he has reached the years of discretion; for I find it nowhere written that infant baptism is to be practiced....”⁸²

If Zwingli was convinced infant baptism was unbiblical, why did he continue to support it? In one place, Zwingli appears to note concern over losing his stipend. He writes, “If however I were to terminate the practice then I fear that I would lose my prebend [stipend].”⁸³ Elsewhere he notes, “But on account of the possibility of offence I omit preaching this; it is better not to preach it until the world is ready to take it.”⁸⁴ According to Blaurock, a contemporary of Zwingli, one reason Zwingli did not continue to support the Anabaptist view was because he did not want an uprising to break out among the people.⁸⁵

Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer (Gütersloh, Germany: Gerd Mohn, 1962), 9:186. Hubmaier claimed that on May 1, 1523, Zwingli and Hubmaier stood together in Zurich and agreed that the practice of infant baptism should be discontinued (Rainbow, “Confessor Baptism,” 189).

⁸¹ Leonard von Muralt and Walter Schmid, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer in der Schweiz, I Band* (Zürich: S. Hirzel, 1952), 184ff, cited in Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, 198.

⁸² Cited in Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, 199. Verduin’s work, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, is largely the product of Verduin’s time spent in Europe in 1950. He examined many of Zwingli’s writings which have not been translated into English. He has provided many of his own translations, and sometimes does not cite where he obtained Zwingli’s quote.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ George Blaurock, “The Beginnings of the Anabaptist Reformation Reminiscences of George Blaurock,” in *Spiritual and Anabaptist Writers*, ed. George H. Williams and Angel M. Mergal (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster Press, 1957), 43. Verduin notes, “It is quite apparent that what restrained Zwingli from introducing believers’ baptism was the consideration that such a baptism would tend to divide society—the one thing that men of sacralist conviction cannot allow” (Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, 200).

The evidence seems to indicate that Zwingli entertained the Anabaptist position initially, but later abandoned it. Balthasar Hubmaier, a man who once held a friendship with Zwingli before being shunned because of his Anabaptist views, writes to Zwingli, "You used to hold to the same ideas, wrote and preached them from the pulpit openly; many hundreds of people have heard it from your mouth."⁸⁶ Although the Anabaptists once counted Zwingli as a friend and ally, he ultimately became one of their staunchest opponents.⁸⁷

Zwingli and the Formulation of Covenant Theology

Theologians have historically viewed Zwingli as the founder of Reformed covenant theology.⁸⁸ It was primarily in response to the Anabaptists that Zwingli formulated his covenant theology so clearly.⁸⁹ Interestingly enough, when Zwingli first wrote in defense of infant baptism, he avoided referring to covenant theology or to the continuity between the testaments.⁹⁰ However, the increased pressure from the Anabaptists compelled Zwingli to use new argumentation. In so doing,

⁸⁶ Balthasar Hubmaier, *Quellen zur Geschichte der Täufer*, IX Band, Balthasar Hubmaiers Schriften von Westin-Gergsten (Gütersloh, Germany: Gerd Mohn, 1962), 186, cited in Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, 200. Zwingli doesn't seem to deny these statements. Rather, Zwingli affirms that he had once thought baptism should not be given to infants. He writes, "After it had been rashly accepted that the sign testifies to the faith then men had to assail infant baptism. For, how could baptism testify to the faith in the case of little children, seeing they cannot believe. This error had misled also me some years ago and made me think it were better not to baptize little ones until they had grown up" (Ulrich Zwingli, *Corpus Reformatorum*, 91:241, cited in Verduin, *The Reformers and Their Stepchildren*, 201).

⁸⁷ Pettegrew, "Israel and the Dark Side of the Reformation," 83.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 80; Lyle D. Bierma, *German Calvinism in the Confessional Age: The Covenant Theology of Caspar Olevianus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 31.

⁸⁹ Lillback writes, "It must be admitted, then, that the struggle with the Anabaptists did cause the Reformed to begin to use the covenant concept of unity of Old and New Testament to bolster their argument for infant baptism" (Peter A. Lillback, *The Binding of God: Calvin's Role in the Development of Covenant Theology* [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 95).

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 89.

Zwingli departed from the normal paedobaptist arguments and embraced a different kind of argumentation. Zwingli himself realized he was employing a new understanding of baptism. He writes:

In this matter of baptism—if I may be pardoned for saying it—I can only conclude that all the doctors have been in error from the time of the apostles. This is a serious and weighty assertion, and I make it with such reluctance that had I not been compelled to do so by contentious spirits, I would have preferred to keep silence.... At many points we shall have to read a different path from that taken either by ancient or more modern writers or by our own contemporaries.⁹¹

What was this new form of argumentation—argumentation which took a different path from ancient or modern writers? It was the divorce between the material and the spiritual. Specifically, in the case of baptism, baptism (as the material, external) was separated from faith (as the spiritual, internal).⁹² Zwingli regularly took passages that spoke of baptism and argued that they were referring to Spirit baptism, not water baptism.⁹³ Faith could relate to Spirit baptism, but not to water baptism. In an unprecedented turn, “Zwingli did what nobody had yet done: he severed baptism from faith.”⁹⁴

Zwingli argued that both papists and Anabaptists put too much emphasis on baptism, which he viewed as a mere external rite.⁹⁵ In order to account for biblical passages which linked faith and baptism, Zwingli

⁹¹ Ulrich Zwingli, *Of Baptism*, in *Zwingli and Bullinger*, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 24, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1953), 130.

⁹² Jeffrey D. Johnson, *The Fatal Flaw of the Theology Behind Infant Baptism* (Conway, AR: Free Grace Press, 2010), 11–12.

⁹³ As an example, paedobaptist Fesko notes that Zwingli argued Romans 6:1–4 was not talking about water baptism, but the internal baptism of the Spirit (J. V. Fesko, *Word, Water, and Spirit: A Reformed Perspective on Baptism* [Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010], 61). See Ulrich Zwingli, “Friendly Exegesis (1527),” in *Huldrych Zwingli: Writings*, ed. E. J. Furcha and H. Wayne Pipkin (Allison Park, PA: Pickwick, 1984), 2.292.

⁹⁴ Rainbow, “Confessor Baptism,” 197.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 198.

would often interpret the reference to baptism as a figurative saying that was symbolic of faith.⁹⁶ Rainbow remarks:

What Zwingli achieved was a marvelously clever and persuasive way to reject the suspicious devices of previous paedobaptist argumentation, *fides aliena*, *fides infusa*, *fides infantium*, and the like, and at the same time to maintain infant baptism against the Anabaptists. But this solution had as its price the integrity of Zwingli's exegesis of the baptismal passages of the NT and the very significance of baptism itself. For if baptism is a mere external thing, disconnected from salvation, why practice it at all?⁹⁷

Once Zwingli had divorced faith from baptism, he then employed a revolutionary argument for paedobaptism against the Anabaptists.⁹⁸ He argued for a unified covenant between the Old and New Testaments. Children were granted entrance into this covenant through circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament. Although quite revolutionary at that time, this belief in a unified covenant has become the dominant argument for paedobaptism in Reformed churches today. Consequently, the connection between faith and baptism has been severely strained in Reformed churches, and in many cases completely separated. Thus we have found the crucial question—what is the relationship between faith and baptism?

The Decision Which Must Be Made: How Does Faith Relate to Baptism?

If faith is integral to baptism, then there is a significant dilemma for the paedobaptist position. This is because the biblical picture of faith includes volitional confession and a change of lifestyle. In Douglas Campbell's definitive study on faith in Paul's writings, he writes, "Whatever else scholars think that faith in Paul was, all agree it had an

⁹⁶ Ulrich Zwingli, *Antwort über Balthasar Hubmaiers Taufüchlein*, in *Huldreich Zwinglis Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Emil Egli et al. (Leipzig: Verlag von Heinsius Nachfolger, 1927), 4:619.

⁹⁷ Rainbow, "Confessor Baptism," 199.

⁹⁸ Lillback, *The Binding of God*, 95.

overt confessional dimension.”⁹⁹ However, although the confessional element is essential, it is not the only element of faith. Faith is not to be viewed as merely an entry criterion, but as a way of life for the believer.¹⁰⁰ After examining some of the key texts on faith in Paul, Campbell summarizes:

We learn from all this then that Christian faith, in the context of the community and the various forms of nurturing activity present within it, is intimately connected to, if it is not identical with, Christian knowing or thinking.... Christian believing is for Paul apparently both comprehensive and ethical, and even emotional; it is an entire mind or mentality.¹⁰¹

In other words, the biblical picture of faith is not just something to be believed. It is a mindset or worldview. Faith carries with it a commitment to do good works. In the simple, yet profound theology of James, faith without works is dead (James 2:17). If faith is integral to baptism—which seems to be the foundational New Testament position, as well as the majority position held throughout most of church history—this is a significant predicament for any paedobaptist position, since infants are incapable of committing to anything. Thus, when addressing the relationship between faith and baptism, there are essentially five options that a paedobaptist can choose from.¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Douglas A. Campbell, “Participation and Faith in Paul,” in *“In Christ” in Paul: Explorations in Paul’s Theology of Union and Participation*, ed. Michael J. Thate, Kevin J. Vanhoozer, and Constantine R. Campbell, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 384 (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 37.

¹⁰⁰ This is not simply a Baptist point. As an example of paedobaptist agreement with this, see Brownson, *The Promise of Baptism*, 85–87.

¹⁰¹ Campbell, “Participation and Faith in Paul,” 43–44.

¹⁰² I have summarized the major options, although I acknowledge there are other viewpoints that subdivide some of these categories. For example, Johnson organizes the different paedobaptist viewpoints into eight categories: (1) *Fides Aliena*; (2) *Fides Infusa*; (3) *Fides Infantium*; (4) *Sacramental Symbolism*; (5) *Pre-credobaptism*; (6) *Presumptive Regeneration*; (7) *Baptismal Regeneration*;

First, one could reject the connection between faith and baptism. Ironically, Reformed traditions that have historically emphasized the need for justification by faith are the ones that occasionally reject the connection between faith and baptism, even though their historic confessions have acknowledged that connection. For example, the *Canons of Dort* note, “We, therefore, by being baptized, do confess our faith, and are bound to give unto God obedience, mortification of the flesh, and newness of life.”¹⁰³ Or, again, the *Anglican Catechism* frames it this way:

Ques. What is required of persons to be baptized?

Ans. Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and Faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that Sacrament.¹⁰⁴

Second, one could hold to *fides aliena*, a vicarious faith. Although a popular position because of Roman Catholic influence, Reformed paedobaptists have been hesitant to embrace such a position for a variety of good, biblical reasons. Believing that one fallible human can vicariously stand in the place of another’s faith is fraught with theological danger. Although Augustine taught that this could only happen with infants, if there is no biblical evidence either way for vicarious faith, why stop at infants? The Roman Catholic Church certainly did not.

Third, one could hold to a *fides infusa* position, the belief that faith is given at the point of baptism. This is an unattractive position since the New Testament predominantly treats faith as a prerequisite to baptism. It is difficult to argue that faith results *from* baptism, while also being the prerequisite *for* baptism.

Fourth, one could hold to *fides propria* or *fides infantium*, the viewpoint that infants themselves somehow believe. This is the standard

(8) *Paedofaith*. For a full explanation and summary of these positions, see Johnson, *The Fatal Flaw*, 4–19.

¹⁰³ Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with a History and Critical Notes: The Evangelical Protestant Creeds, with Translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1882), 890.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 521.

position of the Lutheran Church. Of course, it is difficult to see how infants could exercise a life-changing volitional commitment to God. Usually, the principal argument for this view is that faith is a gift of God, so God could give faith to an infant. While faith is certainly a gift from God (cf. Eph 2:8–9), faith is *also* clearly a volitional belief that facilitates action. Faith and commitment go hand in hand, so it is difficult to see how infants could demonstrate an intentional, volitional commitment to Christ.

Finally, one could view the baptism of adults as a different kind of baptism than that of infants. Or perhaps, as some would claim, it is the same baptism, just a different application. Whereas adults are baptized on the profession of faith, infants are baptized on the possibility of a future faith. This is, in my mind, the most preferable option for the Reformed paedobaptist. Calvin seems to prefer this option. He notes:

We firmly deny that such ought to be baptized unless their conversion and faith have been observed, at least, so far as men can judge. *But it is perfectly clear that infants ought to be put in another category*, for in ancient times if anyone joined himself in religious fellowship with Israel, he had to be taught the Lord's covenant and instructed in the law before he could be marked with circumcision, because he was of foreign nationality, that is, alien to the people of Israel, with whom the covenant, which circumcision sanctioned, had been made.¹⁰⁵

For Calvin, there is a categorical difference between infant baptism and adult baptism. In his understanding, adult baptism symbolizes present faith, repentance and union with Christ; while “infants are baptized into future repentance and faith.”¹⁰⁶

In general, paedobaptist proponents argue against the idea of different kinds of baptisms. For example, John Murray notes that baptism, “has one import and it bears this same import whether it is dispensed to adults or to infants. It signifies union with Christ, purifying from the pollution of sin by the regeneration of the Spirit, and purifying

¹⁰⁵ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, The Library of Christian Classics 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011), 1346. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 1343.

from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ. It can have no other import for infants than this.”¹⁰⁷

However, it is an inescapable conclusion that there is a significant difference between infant baptism and the baptism which is described in the New Testament and in the church confessions. The New Testament and the early church talk about the necessity of faith as a prerequisite of baptism. Jewett describes the paedobaptist conundrum perfectly, “Whether he makes infants an exception to the requirement of Scripture that faith precede baptism, or holds to faith by proxy, or admits that infant baptism is an incomplete form of the sacrament, he is espousing notions alien to the New Testament.”¹⁰⁸

Conclusion

The relationship between faith and baptism is one of the most foundational issues in the baptism debate. It is arguably *the central* issue in the debate. The New Testament evidence and the early church testimony is essentially unanimous on the connection between faith and baptism. Those who were baptized in the New Testament believed on the Lord and publicly confessed that belief. The New Testament picture of faith is that of a volitional expression that resulted in a changed life.

The clear relationship between faith and baptism leads to a dilemma of how faith can work with infant baptism. This dilemma has prompted much writing and discussion. Augustine was instrumental in his formulation of the concept of *fides aliena*, the idea that another person’s faith is credited to an infant when baptized (whether that be the faith of a sponsor or of the church itself). Because of the problems of *fides aliena*, many in the medieval church embraced *fides infusa*, the idea that baptism attributed some virtue or benefit of faith to the infant. Luther differed from those who came before him by proposing *fides propria* or *fides infantium*, the idea that the infants themselves truly believed in some sense during the baptismal process.

Although Luther’s later writings downplayed the importance of faith in baptism (because of his arguments with the Anabaptists), it was not until Ulrich Zwingli that faith was radically severed from baptism. By

¹⁰⁷ John Murray, *Christian Baptism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1980), 41.

¹⁰⁸ Jewett, *Infant Baptism and the Covenant of Grace*, 184.

taking such a bold step, Zwingli revolutionized the paedobaptist argument through his systematization of covenant theology. Zwingli paved the way for future Reformed paedobaptist argumentation against the connection between baptism and faith.

It is unquestionably the view of the New Testament and the early church that baptism and faith are intrinsically bound together. Following the biblical model, the modern church should seek to practice baptism by recognizing that the faith of the disciple is central to the whole process. It is my opinion that the credobaptist position best matches the biblical and historical evidence.