

# Reformed Christian Theology ~ A layman's understanding of the will of God in the Christian life, from a reformed theological perspective.

## Justin Martyr and Baptismal Regeneration

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POSTED BY CRAIG TRUGLIA IN CHURCH HISTORY

≈ 24 COMMENTS

Tags

Anglican, baptism, Baptismal Regeneration, Bible, christianity, Church History, Cyril of Jerusalem, Dialogue with Trypho, Eastern Orthodox, Justin Martyr, Lutheran, Origen, Roman Catholicism



An ancient baptismal font, deep enough so that the believe can stand waste deep in water, either to be submerged into or affused with water.

Many claim that Justin Martyr was a proponent of Baptismal Regeneration. Sometimes, they quote passages such as the following:

*We also pray and fast with them. Then we bring them to a place where there is water, and they are regenerated in the same manner in which we ourselves were regenerated. They then receive the washing with water in the name of God (the Father and Lord of the universe) and of our Savior Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Spirit. For Christ said, 'Unless you are born again, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' (First Apology, Chapter 61).*

However, upon increased research of Justin Martyr's writings, I think he is being misunderstood just like Origen is after him on the topic.

*[A]s Isaiah cries, we have believed, and testify that that very baptism which he announced is alone able to purify those who have repented; and this is the water of life. But the cisterns which you have dug for yourselves are broken and profitless to you. For what is the use of that baptism which cleanses the flesh and body alone? Baptize the soul from wrath and from covetousness, from envy, and from hatred; and, lo! The body is pure (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 14).*

Many people read the underlined and say, "Aha! Baptismal Regeneration!" But, then they fail to consider the immediate context, which the emboldened letters are in reference to.

First, only those who have repented are purified by baptism. Sorry, no babies!

Second, apparently Justin views repentance, and not the literal practice of the Jews which he is deriding, as synonymous with baptism. This part is in bold.

We see this later in his book:

*Wash therefore, and be now clean, and put away iniquity, from your souls, as God bids you be washed in this laver, and be circumcised with the true circumcision (Chapter 18, Dialogue with Trypho).*

In fact, in the 19th chapter Justin speaks of how Abraham, Enoch, Melchizedek, Abel, and other righteous proto-Jews did not require circumcision to be righteous. While he does not explicitly say they were "baptized," it would seem they would have been in the sense he is defining it here. This is why he writes about circumcision that:

For when Abraham himself was in uncircumcision, he was justified and blessed by reason of the faith which he reposed in God, as the Scripture tells. Moreover, the Scriptures and the facts themselves compel us to admit that He received circumcision for a sign, and not for righteousness (Dialogue with Trypho, Chapter 23).

This essentially makes outward baptism unnecessary. His whole argument hinges upon the fact that just as men were made righteous apart from circumcision, then men never needed circumcision. Justin then explains away the sign of circumcision as having its purpose in representing the reality of the faith of the one being circumcised. If baptism is the true circumcision, then obviously baptism represents a reality rather than conferring it as many modern adherents to baptismal regeneration claim.

So, like Origen, he appears to take the position that regeneration does not occur apart from there being a faithful volition in the heart of the one who approaches the waters. Cyril of Jerusalem said the same thing centuries later: “*He casts not His pearls before swine; if you play the hypocrite, though men baptize you now, the Holy Spirit will not baptize you. But if you approach with faith, though men minister in what is seen, the Holy Ghost bestows that which is unseen*” (Catechetical Lecture 17, Chapters 35 and 36).

It appears that the earliest witnesses on the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, that being Justin Martyr and Origen, have found support in weightier thinkers such as Cyril of Jerusalem. Sadly, the teaching of all of these men is not the teaching of the churches that teach the doctrine today, that being the Lutherans, Anglicans, Catholics, and Orthodox.

About these ads

## thoughts on “Justin Martyr and Baptismal Regeneration”

### 1. said:bgpery

December 29, 2015 at 6:52 pm

Baptism is indeed useless (‘become un baptism’) for those baptized who live as pagans. (In fact one could argue it makes their paganism a greater offence to God.) It does not follow however that baptism is therefore “unnecessary”. Those of us who believe God has given us sacraments, and that they benefit us do not believe they are magic... that is, that they do us good regardless of faith, repentance and good will.

From Abraham onward circumcision was mandatory for those wishing to be under the Abrahamic covenant. In the same way from the great commission forward, baptism is necessary for those wishing to be under the New Covenant. As I understand it (I’m not ‘reformed’) this is the classic reformed position. It seems to me that your conclusion that baptism isn’t important enough to be mandatory (If that is what you are saying?) is more Baptist than reformed. Especially considering all ‘classic’ reformed churches do baptize babies.

### REPLY

#### ◦ said:Craig Truglia

December 29, 2015 at 7:40 pm

Dear bgpery, baptism by the Holy Spirit IS necessary. Any denomination that baptizes infants is essentially making the statement that faith on the behalf of the one being baptized is not necessary in order to be conferred salvation, by the Holy Spirit, through the baptismal waters. This turns baptism into a sacrament that saves apart from any operative faith. Some Church Fathers realized this is an incorrect understanding of baptism. Others, like Augustine, appeared to miss the mark entirely.

### REPLY

#### ◦ said:bgpery

December 29, 2015 at 8:45 pm

Dear Craig, (Since this has potential to become a long drawn out discussion, let me first briefly say that I’m a father of 3 with a job so there is a limit on how involved I can be in such a thing if this becomes ongoing.)

I being a Catholic of course disagree with you, however my main point (based on the title of your blog, which I have not yet read in any depth), was that your position on this is more Baptist than Reformed. Reformed theology does teach that baptism is a sacrament, although the definition of sacrament is... I guess I’d call it ‘looser’ or ‘weaker’. All Reformed Churches, except those which are Baptist, do baptize infants.

To say that those who baptize infants believe faith is unnecessary for salvation is quite incorrect. Otherwise what would stop paedobaptists from roaming the streets with super soakers forcibly 'saving' people? No, in fact the clergy of my church are often in the unpopular position of denying baptism to the children of nominally catholic people, who are haven't darkened a church door in years, because the parents are faithless and there is little chance of the child receiving the faith. It is those who have faith, whose children are not made to wait for incorporation into the covenant.

Anyway, where I'm coming on the subject of baptism from can be summed up with what I've written here (<https://benjaminiperegrinus.wordpress.com/2015/04/13/baptism-is-awesome/> / <https://benjaminiperegrinus.wordpress.com/2015/04/17/infant-baptism-why-not/> / <https://benjaminiperegrinus.wordpress.com/2015/05/18/infant-baptism-why-not-part-2-histoical-considerations/> )

o **said:Craig Truglia**

December 29, 2015 at 9:07 pm

Dear bgpery, I value your time, but let me trouble you with a short and important thought. Even if you say parents or witnesses are faith surrogates on behalf of the one being baptized, this idea is illogical. No one can be a faith surrogate, it is not a reasonable idea, let alone a Biblical one nor one we find in any of the 2nd century church fathers (which was the point I was making.) The Catholic position is that justification can be attained by baptism before the age of reason. This idea requires faith surrogacy. Faith surrogacy is just a fancy way of saying the sacraments have power irrespective of the actual existence of faith in the heart receiving the sacrament.

God bless,  
Craig

o **said:bgpery.**

December 30, 2015 at 2:36 pm

Well Craig, you are consistent. So everyone who dies before the age of reason and the mentally retarded go to hell, because they are incapable of faith. And in this case I take faith to mean intellectual belief. I don't really know what to say about that except that 1. It makes God seem a monster who arbitrarily decides to save or damn, which is the sort of classic complaint against Calvinism. And 2. It seems to me to make faith a work instead of a gift, only those intellectually able to have and choose to have 'faith' can be saved. That doesn't sound very mongeristic to me. Please don't take this the wrong way, I mean it in all charity, but I hope for your sake you never suffer the loss of a child.

As far as my position on baptism of infants; grace, faith, baptism, repentance, the sacraments I see these all as gifts given to us freely by God, not works which earn. The sacraments work on their own. All that is necessary for baptism to happen is correct form, matter and intent. Baptism works on its own, but how could it benefit the faithless? It's like making someone a king who neither acknowledges nor exercises his authority. If salvation is a free gift who is more passive than a baby? When Christian parents baptize their children there is a reasonable hope that those children will exercise that baptism. Just as in the old testament circumcision, which corresponds to baptism, was given to Hebrew infants with the expectation that they would live the covenant. Baptism justifies but I don't hold that justification is a discreet event which occurs and is over. Justification is ongoing as are faith and repentance.

Faith surrogacy is I think perhaps a misleading way of thinking of this, adults are responsible for themselves but parents are responsible for their children. For example, If someone is giving out free flu shots, I can consent to receive one but in order for my children to receive one I need to consent for them.

Anyway God bless you,

o **said:Craig Truglia**

December 30, 2015 at 4:56 pm

I will be brief because you are busy.

"Well Craig, you are consistent. So everyone who dies before the age of reason and the mentally retarded go to hell, because they are incapable of faith."

Essentially, yes though we know for a fact that God can give faith even to the unborn (i.e. John the Baptist). I just do not know at what frequency this occurs.

Further, I do not think everyone is punished equally in Hell, as the day of judgment is more tolerable for some rather than others. So, the idea of "Limbo" for infants may not be that far off, even though it is not an official teaching anymore.

"And in this case I take faith to mean intellectual belief."

It means trust in God and His Son, whatever form that takes. An infant trusts her mother. So, we don't need to be rocket scientists to be saved. However, we do need faith.

"I don't really know what to say about that except that 1. It makes God seem a monster who arbitrarily decides to save or damn, which is the sort of classic complaint against Calvinism. And 2. It seems to me to make faith a work instead of a gift, only those intellectually able to have and choose to have 'faith' can be saved."

I hope you see that your latter point works upon a presumption that is Biblically incorrect (even the unborn have faith.) Your former point is not for me to decide, all men have sin and God is right in punishing sin. Who are we, as the clay, to question the potter?

"The sacraments work on their own. All that is necessary for baptism to happen is correct form, matter and intent."

And you have proven my point. This is Catholic teaching. The point of the article you are responding to do is that I found three church fathers that would have not taken this position. They said the sacrament has no power apart from faith in the believer. You have twisted this to mean that faith is a necessary work. Then, you go ahead and explain how you don't consider sacraments works, but if they are worked the right way, they give people salvation apart from their faith.

What you just described IS works-based salvation divorced from faith. I pray that you repent of this and place all your trust in Christ. His sacraments exist to bless and sustain you by His grace, if you trust their form and the intent of the one administering them and not the God who has given them to you and Him alone, there is no hope for salvation.

"If salvation is a free gift who is more passive than a baby?"

These ideas seem to be of your own choosing, they do not fit a Biblical, or here, the traditional paradigm.

"When Christian parents baptize their children there is a reasonable hope that those children will exercise that baptism."

Not really. Out of all the Catholics baptized how many go to Confession or even Mass once a year? 1 out of 10. So reasonable is a 10% shot?

"Just as in the old testament circumcision, which corresponds to baptism, was given to Hebrew infants with the expectation that they would live the covenant."

But Abraham was justified before he was circumcised...

"Faith surrogacy is I think perhaps a misleading way of thinking of this, adults are responsible for themselves but parents are responsible for their children."

It's irrational, though. It is like if my father is a priest, and I am an okay guy but not religious, my father's good intents can save me. "No," you say, "You passed the age of reason!" So, now you invented these extrabiblical rules that say all those past the age of reason must have faith and all those before don't need it but can rely upon their parent or guardian (if adopted). This seems to me arbitrary and contrary to truth.

God bless you,

Craig

o *said:bgpercy.*

December 30, 2015 at 8:48 pm

"Abraham was justified before he was circumcised"

Yes but his son's and his son's son's, weren't. in fact the majority of Hebrews throughout history were circumcised on the 8th day.

When I have time I will go read St. Justin and St. Cyril in context. But briefly, to live in sin without repentance and faith does render ones baptism useless, I already said that, I see nothing there that conflicts with belief that baptism does something. Since the Justin reference if from the dialog with Trypho the Jew, I suspect the context is the old Law (ritual washings) vs Christ. Looking through your blog, it seems that your purpose is largely to find evidence of the reformed (Baptist) version of doctrine in the Fathers, I might ask 'if infant baptism was a novelty introduced, against apostolic practice, where is the outcry and debate?'

To suggest that sacramental theology is salvation by works is to misunderstand it, in the sacraments who is it that baptizes? Who absolves? It is Christ. You may not believe that but my faith is that Christ baptized me, forgives me and so forth. My faith is in Christ who comes to me in many ways but in the sacraments also.

I think this discussion is probably not going to be very fruitful, I doubt we are going to convince each other but anyway I wish you the best.

o *said:Craig Truglia*

December 30, 2015 at 9:10 pm

A few quick points if you can bear with me:

-You may benefit from reading Chrysostom and Aquinas on Rom 4. It isn't just Abraham, everyone is justified by faith before having done anything. This is why the Catholic Church teaches Baptism by Desire. If someone dies before baptism, they are conferred the grace of baptism by virtue of their faith. This is not me talking, that's standard Catholic doctrine.

-You ask: I might ask 'if infant baptism was a novelty introduced, against apostolic practice, where is the outcry and debate?'

My response: The first mention of infant baptism was an outcry, Tertullian's On Baptism. Here's my simple question for you: Can you pick a single Church Father who was baptized as an infant? Many had Christian parents: Origen, Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, the list goes on and on. None were baptized as infants. Why is that?

The point of my blog is ultimately not to defend one school of theology, but to dig for the truth. I'll become a Catholic tomorrow if it is the truth. That's not a big deal to me.

God bless,  
Craig

- *said:*[bgperry](#)

December 31, 2015 at 2:05 pm

"The point of my blog is... to dig for the truth"  
In that case I have nothing but respect for you.

I will investigate Aquinas and John C. on Rom 4.

"Can you pick a single Church Father who was baptized as an infant? ... None were baptized as infants."

Do you have any evidence? As far as I am aware, detailed personal information on the church fathers is quite limited, I'm thinking in the majority of cases we have no information on their baptism details (where, by whom, when).

I would expect a massive debate and evidence of it, if infant baptism were an introduced novelty, I have researched the question and the summary what I was able to find is here. <https://benjaminiperegrinus.wordpress.com/2015/05/18/infant-baptism-why-not-part-2-histoical-considerations/>

I consider Tertullians objections illegitimate since he was essentially advocating we try for a deathbed baptism, a reflection of his rigorist heresy.

Happy New Year and God bless you.

- *said:*[Craig Truglia](#)

December 31, 2015 at 2:40 pm

Thank you for the kind words.

To answer your question: "Do you have any evidence? As far as I am aware, detailed personal information on the church fathers is quite limited..."

We have more than you think. Augustine speaks in the Confessions how he was almost baptized when he was a child because of a sickness, but he pulled through. Likewise, his father and friend were baptized in this manner. No infant baptisms are recorded in his book. Clearly a trend is visible. People baptize either before death, or after a significant conversion experience. The baptism of infants is curiously absent.

We know that Jerome was baptized with his friend Bonosus after accepting Christ. Jerome had Christian parents.

Ambrose, before being consecrated a Bishop, grew up in a Christian family and was a politician. He was baptized the same week he became a Bishop.

So, do we have a church father who unequivocally was baptized as an infant, because we have more than a few notable examples of ECFs brought up in Christian families that were not.

It appears to be an argument from silence that infant baptism was the norm, because the norm ought to be what we actually know, not presumptions based upon silence.

God bless,  
Craig

- *said:*[Maximilian Nightingale](#)

January 1, 2016 at 9:18 am

It seems the concern on the Catholic side is not so much whether infant baptism was the norm (it seems that it was not), but whether it was considered a true baptism when it was done. All of those you have cited indicate that it is. And that it is on the basis of this reality that it is either put off or given near death.

Even Cyril of Jerusalem, who you cite, is speaking in the context of lectures to newly baptized or soon to be baptized Christian adults. He affirms those things that must accompany entry into the Church, but does speak about infants inasmuch as it is not relevant to the topic at hand.

Origen and Jerome had both visited or lived Palestine (where Cyril of Jerusalem wrote) and neither notes any objections to infant baptism in this area.

- *said:*[Craig Truglia](#)

January 1, 2016 at 12:06 pm

I don't want to go to far down the rabbit trail of the historicity of infant baptism, I will simply say that I do not think the practice was as widespread as most make it out to be. If it were so widespread, we would have at least ONE example of a Church Father who was baptized as an infant.

It appears to me that while baptizing infants had to be the norm in specific locales for an indeterminate period of time (i.e. Carthage where Tertullian and Cyrian wrote) it apparently was not a widespread practice, as it wasn't practiced in Thagaste, Dalmatia, Italy, and other locales.

We have a story related to us by Rufinus about Athanasius. Athanasius grew up with Christian parents and when he was a young man, Pope Alexander I of Alexandria was walking by seeing him play "baptism" with other young men.

Apparently, Athanasius recited everything correctly. Alexander told the young men that the baptisms were official, and that Athanasius should stop as none of them were properly catechized.

<https://books.google.com/books?id=2VREAOAAIAAJ&pg=PA124&lpg=PA124&dq=athanasius%27+baptism&source=bl&ots=Kcu2otZxxo&sig=CW9lehFh6N9pZPPiyLFcB-dArMw&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjMnIrgyIjKAhVJWj4KHxm-CJY4ChDoAQgwMAY#v=onepage&q=athanasius%20baptism&f=false>

My speculation, which in my reading has some justification, is that baptism was administered to the very young when sickness or death was a possibility. But, there is just too much evidence to ignore that catechizing before baptism was the widespread practice even for Christians, hence the warnings that the baptism is powerless apart from faith. Obviously, this would be inconsistent with baptizing sick children, but I am not arguing that people other than the Apostles in the Scripture are consistent (and even the Apostles, when not writing the Scripture, did inconsistent things.)

God bless,  
Craig

2. *said:*Maximilian Nightingale

December 29, 2015 at 10:35 pm

It might be worth noting that the Church will not baptize an infant unless there is a reasonable hope that the child will be raised in the Christian faith. Thus there is an order to faith present in the Church's conferral of the sacrament on those who cannot make acts of faith.

As for the connection between faith and repentance: Indeed, baptism is of no value to one who does not believe or repent, but only receives the sacrament through some pretense. Nevertheless, it may not be repeated.

#### **REPLY**

o *said:*LifeRiderTom

December 30, 2015 at 4:23 am

Craig,

I'd be interested to know what you and those that embrace the Reformed theology believe with respect to the unborn or those that do not have faith prior to death. In other words, what is the eternal outcome of a person that dies without having had the time or opportunity to develop saving faith?

I understand that only God is the final judge, but I'm simply seeking an explanation of those doctrinal beliefs.

Blessings  
Tom

#### **REPLY**

o *said:***Craig Truglia**

December 30, 2015 at 12:52 pm

Tom, my presumption is eternal damnation. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. That is you and me. Christ came and paid the full penalty for sin on the cross and lived a perfectly righteous life, satisfying all of God's expectations of due honor being paid to Him. Those of us in His Church are one flesh with Christ by faith much like a married couple is one flesh, and we are accounted as Christ and He as us.

Those who do not know Christ or trust in anything other than Christ, are not one with Him and cannot enjoy eternity with God.

I hope this helps.

God bless,  
Craig

o *said:***bgpery**

December 30, 2015 at 10:58 am

Craig, we can talk, just understand I have other obligations which are more important.

Is it your position that those below the age of reason cannot be justified?

**REPLY**

◦ *said:***Craig Truglia**

December 30, 2015 at 12:55 pm

Let me ask whether you understand that faith surrogacy in effect makes a sacrament powerful apart from faith. I take issue with the preceding, but it appears to be the only logical outcome of your beliefs.

To answer your question, my position is that apart from an act of grace where the child knows Jesus Christ like John the Baptist did when he leapt in his mother's womb, there is no salvation. For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

I appreciate your time.

God bless,  
Craig

◦ *said:***Craig Truglia**

December 30, 2015 at 1:01 pm

Max, you just said without faith and repentance the sacrament is void, but that faith surrogacy works when there is a "good expectation" that someone will be faithful. I do not think this works on two levels.

First, a good expectation is not the ability to see in the future, nor the existence of present faith.

Second, it's be like me taking the Lord's Supper now in an unworthy way or Confessing a sin I am not repentant for, but if I repent later it all becomes okay.

Faith surrogacy cannot work and clearly Augustine was wrong in his idea vis a vis Cyril of Jerusalem, who never wrote on infant baptism. Reading Prosper of Aquitaine, he clearly wrote that God's predestination can be seen among babies based upon who God willed to have baptized and who ended up not being baptized. Clearly they understood the waters as that powerful. This faith surrogacy business is a way to try to make Augustine's and Prosper of Aquitaine's ideas work with that of thinkers such as Cyril and Justin martyr. I just do not think it works, I cannot see among the fathers or in the Scripture where substitute faith or future faith acts as a deposit in which it makes a sacrament act as a retroactive blessing.

God bless my friend,  
Craig

P.S. I wrote back to your facebook message, I didn't know I had it.

**REPLY**

3. *said:***Maximilian Nightingale**

December 30, 2015 at 10:22 pm

I had said that baptism received under false pretenses is not efficacious for salvation, but this does not mean it is void, i.e. invalid. Such a person cannot be baptized because a true baptism has taken place, and their repentance must be accompanied by a different sacred sign. But there is a difference between a person whose will is an obstacle to salvation (a nonbeliever) and one whose will is not determined (an infant).

I found the text in Tertullian you mention above (<http://st-takla.org/books/en/ecf/003/0030740.html>), and while I do not agree with his practical conclusion, it contains two truths: (1) people are baptizing infants in his day, and (2) this counts as baptism, and cannot be repeated.

If you are simply discouraging infant baptism, as did a number of early fathers, that is one thing for discussion. But it seems the fathers who discourage infant baptism, did so on the basis of the *real* effects that follow upon receiving the sacrament (e.g. remission of sins, obligation to live a Christian life, unrepeatability of the sacrament). To deny that baptism does anything to/for an infant would not seem to agree with them.

I would like to read more of Augustine (and others) on the question, but if I recall correctly, he criticizes parents who do not baptize their child, because in doing this they allow/expect their children to live sinful lives that they will just wash away later at baptism, whereas parents should be raising their children to be Christians from the get-go. Indeed, he laments the delay of his own baptism (as I later did when I found out mine had been delayed, even though it was only 3 months!). But let me know if you know anywhere where the fathers reject infant baptism for any reason other than its *real* effects.

As for the comment about all children being damned, well, "Let the children come to me." So that he can give them a little blessing? No, but that they may enter eternal life. I will not speak about the fate of unbaptized infants, but of the baptized there is no doubt. They have died and risen with Christ. I find interesting that in the grace/works dynamic, the Catholics are often thought to emphasize works, whereas in this case you insist on a meritorious work (the act of faith), whereas the Church insists that something wholly gratuitous (this sacrament, preceding an infant's willing) is sufficient for salvation.

**REPLY**

- *said:***Maximilian Nightingale**

December 30, 2015 at 10:41 pm

A little more on faith: You said above that a congregation baptizing infants is saying that faith is unnecessary. I wanted to respond to this by saying that faith is necessary for salvation for those in whom it is possible. Can a child be obligated to make an act of faith (or any act of will) before it is possible to do so? No. But upon reaching the age of reason, a baptized child is to believe and live a life of faith, and to reject this faith would be to reject the salvation gratuitously given. So indeed, the Church does require faith for salvation, but she does not require the impossible.

Looking around a bit (only briefly), I found some quotes from 2nd/3rd cent fathers on the salvation of infants:

<http://www.churchfathers.org/category/sacraments/infant-baptism/>

I have not searched out their original context, but they indicate the early presence of this practice. The second passage from Schaff in this article gives a good survey of the data: <https://bible.org/question/what-are-historical-origins-infant-baptism>

#### **REPLY**

- *said:***Craig Truglia**

December 31, 2015 at 2:20 am

Max, thank you for your response. Pardon me if any of the proceeding sounds disrespectful, it is not my intent.

“A little more on faith: You said above that a congregation baptizing infants is saying that faith is unnecessary. I wanted to respond to this by saying that faith is necessary for salvation for those in whom it is possible. Can a child be obligated to make an act of faith (or any act of will) before it is possible to do so? No. But upon reaching the age of reason, a baptized child is to believe and live a life of faith, and to reject this faith would be to reject the salvation gratuitously given.”

Yes, you call that “confirmation.” However, this is really inconsistent. Does the faith now save at confirmation? Does it retroactively save?

It must retroactively save, as Catholic doctrine is that baptism justifies the one being baptized, even before the age of reason. And if it retroactively saves, what you are really saying is that human beings essentially exist on a plain outside of time, where decisions made in the future have a significant effect on their present condition.

Wait, it gets even more confusing. Augustine and Prosper of Aquitaine clearly taught that all baptized infants who die before the age of reason are saved. So, they are not saved because of any future faith at all, but rather by the power of the baptism divorced from faith.

Max, you have been very charitable, kind, and intellectually honest. It has been a pleasure to interact with you on so many different topics, and I pray we do so in the future. But, our religion hats off for a second, doesn't the explanation on how baptism saves apart from faith, but there is future faith, but there are exceptions to that rule sound so inconsistent, that it cannot possibly be true?

That is how it sounds to me.

“Looking around a bit (only briefly), I found some quotes from 2nd/3rd cent fathers on the salvation of infants...”

“I have not searched out their original context, but they indicate the early presence of this practice. The second passage from Schaff in this article gives a good survey of the data...”

This is a whole other topic which I may address in articles in the future, but I am not sure I want to debate right now (I have too many irons in the fire.) I will read your previous link and in the meantime, I would ask you to see if you can find me a Church Father who was baptized as an infant. I know that Tertullian spoke of the practice of paedobaptism in his argument against the practice, and Cyprian wrote about it as a given, but we have a very long list of church fathers with Christian parents who apparently never were baptized until adulthood. This includes Origen, Ambrose, Augustine, and Jerome just on the top of my head. I am curious, are there ANY ECFs whatsoever that were baptized as infants?

God bless,  
Craig

- *said:***Craig Truglia**

December 31, 2015 at 2:26 am

“But it seems the fathers who discourage infant baptism, did so on the basis of the real effects that follow upon receiving the sacrament (e.g. remission of sins, obligation to live a Christian life, unrepeatability of the sacrament).”

Obviously Tertullian and Augustine had the view that the sacrament was powerful irrespective of the faith of the individual. Cyril of Jerusalem specifically repudiated this view. It appears not to be an idea settled in the early church.

As for your other comments, I think my previous reply addresses your concerns. Faith is not a work, as Augustine has shown from the Scripture, faith is not of ourselves it is the gift of God. What you appear to be arguing is that people can be saved by works, and those works are not of themselves, they are the gift of God.



I agree that we are saved not of ourselves but rather gratuitously by a force outside ourselves. I argue that this force is God through faith. You argue it is God through meritorious works performed by His Church.

The crucial difference is how we have God saving. I through faith and you through works. I am sure you see, when we get to the core of the issue, what I am saying squares much more closely to what the Scripture is saying. This is why I think it is correct.

Have a good evening.

God bless,  
Craig

#### **REPLY**

- *said:***Maximilian Nightingale**

December 31, 2015 at 10:22 am

Thank you for our responses! I have no doubt you are seeking for the truth in these matters.

Just a couple clarifying points: The sacrament of confirmation is not the same as a child accepting the faith, but is an integral part of Christian initiation. In the West, it is common to defer this sacrament until later, but in the Eastern Catholic and Orthodox Churches, an infant will receive baptism, confirmation/chrism, and the Eucharist all together. For adults entering the Church (East or West), all three of these are received together. I believe the original reason it was deferred in the West, was so that a bishop could confer it, but now it is mistakenly seen as someone "accepting" the grace received at baptism. Rather it is a confirmation, in the sense of making firm/strong in the faith that one has.

As for the faith involved in baptizing infants, the Church's that it is the faith of the Church herself which provides for the infant. So it is not the future faith, or even necessarily the faith of the godparents, parents, minister, etc., but of the Church who never fails in faith. Indeed, one could discuss further how that works, but I wanted to clarify where the Church places it.

A further question: Would you then attempt to rebaptize an infant who had received baptism? Or a non-believer who received it sacrilegiously?

#### **REPLY**

- *said:***Craig Truglia**

December 31, 2015 at 11:26 am

One point, and one answer to your question:

Even if the infant is saved because "the Church herself...provides [faith] for the infant" as you claim, this is not a workable solution, The Church is not a disembodied spirit or a part of non believers. The Church is the Body of Christ, made up of body parts (i.e. individuals) who all have faith in God, their heavenly Groom. So, again, all you have done is made a faith surrogate in place of the individual who must have faith to be saved. The Scripture teaches, "The righteous shall live by faith." There is nothing else we can live by. Faith is not a work, it is a gift from God. No other gift given by God saves.

To answer your question, yes I believe that what you term as "re-baptism" is necessary, because as Cyril said if you do not believe, though you are baptized by water you are not baptized by the Holy Spirit. So, I do not believe like Tertullian that the baptismal waters have any effect, which can be wasted, because they are conferred at the wrong age. Baptism is not conferred apart from faith. Baptism apart from faith is mock baptism, the Spirit is not involved in it.

God bless,  
Craig