

- 1) The apostolic Church baptized whole "households" (Acts 16:33; 1 Cor. 1:16), a term encompassing children and infants as well as servants. While these texts do not specifically mention—nor exclude—infants, the very use of the term "households" indicates an understanding of the family as a unit. Even one believing parent in a household makes the children and even the unbelieving spouse "holy" (1 Cor. 7:14).
 - a) Acts 16:33-34 "At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and **all his family were baptized**. The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he **and his whole family**."
 - b) 1 Corinthians 1:16 "Yes, I also **baptized the household** of Stephanas."
- 2) Baptism is the Christian equivalent of circumcision, or "the circumcision of Christ": "In him you were also circumcised with . . . the circumcision of Christ, having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col. 2:11–12). Thus, like circumcision, baptism can be given to children as well as adults. The difference is that circumcision was powerless to save (Gal. 5:6, 6:15), but "baptism . . . now saves you" (1 Pet. 3:21).
The kingdom is theirs, Jesus says, and they should be brought to him; and this means baptism.
- 3) Genesis 17:12 " For the generations to come **every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised**, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner--those who are not your offspring."
- 4) Luke 2:21 "On the eighth day, when it was time to circumcise him, he was named Jesus, the name the angel had given him before he had been conceived."
 - a) What is more important circumcision or baptism? Can circumcision save you? No! Can baptism save you? Yes! So if God said it was important to circumcise children on the eighth day, how much more important to baptize children as infants! If Jesus was not too good to be circumcised as a child, are we too good to be circumcised as infants? Do we think we are better than Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior?
- 5) Luke 18:15–16 tells us that "they were bringing even infants" to Jesus; and he himself related this to the kingdom of God: "Let the children come to me . . . for to such belongs the kingdom of God."
The kingdom is theirs, Jesus says, and they should be brought to him; and this means baptism.
- 6) Irenaeus "For He came to save all through means of Himself— all, I say, who through Him are **born again to God — infants, and children, and boys, and youths**, and old men. He therefore passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, thus sanctifying infants; a child for children, thus sanctifying those who are of this age, being at the same time made to them an example of piety, righteousness, and submission; a youth for youths, becoming an example to youths, and thus sanctifying them for the Lord. So likewise He was an old man for old men, that He might be a perfect Master for all, not merely as respects the setting forth of the truth, but also as regards age, sanctifying at the same time the aged also, and becoming an example to them likewise." (Against Heresies 2:22:4) [A.D. 189]).

- 7) **Hippolytus** "Baptize first the children, and if they can speak for themselves let them do so. Otherwise, let their parents or other relatives speak for them" (*The Apostolic Tradition* 21:16 [A.D. 215]).
- 8) **Origen** "Every soul that is born into flesh is soiled by the filth of wickedness and sin. . . . In the Church, baptism is given for the remission of sins, and, according to the usage of the Church, baptism is given even to infants. If there were nothing in infants which required the remission of sins and nothing in them pertinent to forgiveness, the grace of baptism would seem superfluous" (*Homilies on Leviticus* 8:3 [A.D. 248]).
"The Church received from the apostles the tradition of giving baptism even to infants. The apostles, to whom were committed the secrets of the divine sacraments, knew there are in everyone innate strains of [original] sin, which must be washed away through water and the Spirit" (*Commentaries on Romans* 5:9 [A.D. 248]).
- 9) **Cyprian of Carthage** "As to what pertains to the case of infants: You [Fidus] said that they ought not to be baptized within the second or third day after their birth, that the old law of circumcision must be taken into consideration, and that you did not think that one should be baptized and sanctified within the eighth day after his birth. In our council it seemed to us far otherwise. No one agreed to the course which you thought should be taken. Rather, we all judge that the mercy and grace of God ought to be denied to no man born" (*Letters* 64:2 [A.D. 253]). "If, in the case of the worst sinners and those who formerly sinned much against God, when afterwards they believe, the remission of their sins is granted and no one is held back from baptism and grace, how much more, then, should an infant not be held back, who, having but recently been born, has done no sin, except that, born of the flesh according to Adam, he has contracted the contagion of that old death from his first being born. For this very reason does he [an infant] approach more easily to receive the remission of sins: because the sins forgiven him are not his own but those of another" (*ibid.*, 64:5).
- 10) **Gregory of Nazianz** "Do you have an infant child? Allow sin no opportunity; rather, let the infant be sanctified from childhood. From his most tender age let him be consecrated by the Spirit. Do you fear the seal [of baptism] because of the weakness of nature? Oh, what a pusillanimous mother and of how little faith!" (*Oration on Holy Baptism* 40:7 [A.D. 388]). "'Well enough,' some will say, 'for those who ask for baptism, but what do you have to say about those who are still children, and aware neither of loss nor of grace? Shall we baptize them too?' Certainly [I respond], if there is any pressing danger. Better that they be sanctified unaware, than that they depart unsealed and uninitiated" (*ibid.*, 40:28).
- 11) **John Chrysostom** "You see how many are the benefits of baptism, and some think its heavenly grace consists only in the remission of sins, but we have enumerated ten honors [it bestows]! For this reason we baptize even infants, though they are not defiled by [personal] sins, so that there may be given to them holiness, righteousness,

adoption, inheritance, brotherhood with Christ, and that they may be his [Christ's] members" (*Baptismal Catecheses in Augustine, Against Julian* 1:6:21 [A.D. 388]).

12) Augustine "What the universal Church holds, not as instituted [invented] by councils but as something always held, is most correctly believed to have been handed down by apostolic authority. Since others respond for children, so that the celebration of the sacrament may be complete for them, it is certainly availing to them for their consecration, because they themselves are not able to respond" (*On Baptism, Against the Donatists* 4:24:31 [A.D. 400]).

"The custom of Mother Church in baptizing infants is certainly not to be scorned, nor is it to be regarded in any way as superfluous, nor is it to be believed that its tradition is anything except apostolic" (*The Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 10:23:39 [A.D. 408]).

"Cyprian was not issuing a new decree but was keeping to the most solid belief of the Church in order to correct some who thought that infants ought not be baptized before the eighth day after their birth. . . . He agreed with certain of his fellow bishops that a child is able to be duly baptized as soon as he is born" (*Letters* 166:8:23 [A.D. 412]).

"By this grace baptized infants too are ingrafted into his [Christ's] body, infants who certainly are not yet able to imitate anyone. Christ, in whom all are made alive . . . gives also the most hidden grace of his Spirit to believers, grace which he secretly infuses even into infants. . . . It is an excellent thing that the Punic [North African] Christians call baptism salvation and the sacrament of Christ's Body nothing else than life. Whence does this derive, except from an ancient and, as I suppose, apostolic tradition, by which the churches of Christ hold inherently that without baptism and participation at the table of the Lord it is impossible for any man to attain either to the kingdom of God or to salvation and life eternal? This is the witness of Scripture, too. . . . If anyone wonders why children born of the baptized should themselves be baptized, let him attend briefly to this. . . . The sacrament of baptism is most assuredly the sacrament of regeneration" (*Forgiveness and the Just Deserts of Sin, and the Baptism of Infants* 1:9:10; 1:24:34; 2:27:43 [A.D. 412]).

13) Council of Carthage V "Item: It seemed good that whenever there were not found reliable witnesses who could testify that without any doubt they [abandoned children] were baptized and when the children themselves were not, on account of their tender age, able to answer concerning the giving of the sacraments to them, all such children should be baptized without scruple, lest a hesitation should deprive them of the cleansing of the sacraments. This was urged by the [North African] legates, our brethren, since they redeem many such [abandoned children] from the barbarians" (Canon 7 [A.D. 401]).

14) Council of Mileum II "[W]hoever says that infants fresh from their mothers' wombs ought not to be baptized, or say that they are indeed baptized unto the remission of sins, but that they draw nothing of the original sin of Adam, which is expiated in the bath of regeneration . . . let him be anathema [excommunicated]. Since what the

apostle [Paul] says, 'Through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so passed to all men, in whom all have sinned' [Rom. 5:12], must not be understood otherwise than the Catholic Church spread everywhere has always understood it. For on account of this rule of faith even infants, who in themselves thus far have not been able to commit any sin, are therefore truly baptized unto the remission of sins, so that that which they have contracted from generation may be cleansed in them by regeneration" (Canon 3 [A.D. 416]).

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