

BAPTISM

Chapter Two

Magic Words and Infant Baptism

According to Martin Luther, we get the basic *formula* for making the waters of baptism efficacious when he says, “For mere water could not do such a thing, but the Word does it, and (as said above) the fact that the name of God is comprehended therein. But where the name of God is, there must be also life and salvation, that it may indeed be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water; for by the Word such power is imparted to Baptism that it is a laver of regeneration, as St. Paul also calls it, Titus 3, 5.”¹ This is important if we are going to understand the *Sacramental View* of infant baptism as well. When right words are said along with water baptism, the water’s of baptism become “consecrated” waters “laden with supernatural power.” We find this stated by Rudolph Bultmann as quoted by G.R. Beasley-Murray:

“How are we to explain this attribution of saving grace to the performance of an outward act like baptism? One answer would take us back to primitive religion. Bultmann evidently so understands the position. Explaining the New Testament view he writes: ‘the concept ‘sacrament’ rests upon the assumption that under certain conditions supernatural powers can be bound to natural objects of the world and to spoken words as their vehicles and mediators. If the conditions are fulfilled (if, for instance, the prescribed formula is correctly spoken and the material is thereby ‘consecrated’ – i.e. laden with supernatural power), and if the act is consummated according to the prescribed rite, then the supernatural powers go into effect, and the act, which apart from these conditions would be only a purely worldly, natural one like a bath or a meal, is itself a supernatural ceremony which works a miracle.’ This reduces the baptism of the New Testament to the level of magic: by the correct recitation of the formula the water is laden with supernatural power, the pronouncement of the name brings the god on the scene and the miracle is performed.”²

Again, as we see in this quote, we cannot understand the *Sacramental View* of water baptism apart from understanding the *assumptions* (presuppositions) imposed upon every Bible text where baptism is mentioned. There are also a number of other assumptions necessary to the *Sacramental View* of infant baptism.

¹ Luther, Martin, *The Large Catechism XIII Part Fourth of Baptism*-Translated by F. Bente and W.H.T. Dau, Published in: *Triglot Concordia: The Symbolical Books of the Ev. Lutheran Church* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921) available on www at: <http://www.iclnet.org/pub/resources/text/wittenberg/luther/catechism/web/cat-13.html>

² Beasley-Murray, G.R., *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company) page 264 quoting from *New Testament Theology, I*, p. 172 by Rudolph Bultmann

“²⁵ And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. ²⁶ And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed. ²⁷ And the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. ²⁸ But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here. ²⁹ Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, ³⁰ And brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? ³¹ And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house. ³² And they spake unto him the word of the Lord, and to all that were in his house. ³³ And he took them {*Paul and Silas*} the same hour of the night, and washed *their* stripes; and was baptized {*the jailer*}, he and all his, straightway. ³⁴ And when he had brought them into his house, he set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house” (Acts 16:25-34).

I know of no one who holds to the *Sacramental View* of water baptism who does not admit that there is not one single reference to the baptism of infants in the Bible. Their teaching on infant baptism is based upon an *inference*, or an *assumption*. The presupposition is that water baptism saves. They then interpret the texts according to that presupposition. The assumption is twofold:

1. There must have been infants in the Philippian jailer’s “house.”
2. Since all the people in the Philippian jailer’s “house” were “baptized,” the infants must also have been baptized.

They apply these assumptions to every *household* text. These primary household *proof texts* are as follows:

“³⁸ Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. ³⁹ For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call” (Acts 2:38-39).

“¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained *us*” (Acts 16:14-15).

“¹⁴ I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius; ¹⁵ Lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. ¹⁶ And I baptized also the household of Stephanas: besides, I know not whether I baptized any other” (I Corinthians 1:14-16).

The *Sacramental View* of water baptism is an outgrowth of what is known as *Replacement Theology*. Those in *Replacement Theology* believe that the nation of Israel was replaced with a State Church. The Old Covenant sacrifices were replaced with New Covenant sacraments. Both the Old Covenant sacrifices and the New Covenant sacraments are viewed as efficacious to salvation. Old Covenant circumcision was replaced by New Covenant infant baptism. The Old Covenant priesthood was replaced with a New Covenant priesthood or clergy. All of these teachings are based upon presuppositions rather than biblical interpretation.

The interesting thing is that Paul refers to belief in the salvific efficacy of Old Covenant sacrifices as “works” and states emphatically that trust in such “works” for salvation does not save anyone. In fact, trust in such “works” (Ritualism or Moralism) condemns and is, in fact, a manifestation of unbelief (Hebrews 4:1-11). The epistle to the Hebrews is to address the problem raised by the Judaizers who were telling the Jewish Christians, that along with faith in Christ, they needed to keep the Jewish rituals, sacrifices, holy days, and the Temple rites in order to be saved. This is *grace plus works*. This was the corrupted view of Law keeping that the Judaizers sought to continue into Christianity.

“¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. ² For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. ³ For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world {*Revelation 13:8*}. ⁴ For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. ⁵ And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest. ⁶ Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: ⁷ Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. ⁸ For if Jesus {*should be Joshua*} had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest {*through faith*}, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. ¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Hebrews 4:1-11).

Paul refers to those teaching such things as the Judaizers taught were those that “trouble you” (Galatians 5:12). Even those of the Old Covenant who taught that the sacrifices of the Law were salvifically efficacious were condemned for such a contradiction against Christ.

“¹ Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. ² Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. ³ For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. ⁴ Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law {*Moralism in keeping commandments or Ritualism in trusting in the sacrifices for remission of sins*}; ye are fallen from grace. ⁵ For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. ⁶ For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love. ⁷ Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? ⁸ This persuasion *cometh* not of him that calleth you. ⁹ A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. ¹⁰ I have confidence in you through the Lord, that ye will be none otherwise minded: but he that troubleth you shall bear his judgment {*damnation for his false beliefs*}, whosoever he be. ¹¹ And I, brethren, if I yet preach circumcision {*salvifically*}, why do I yet suffer persecution? then is the offence of the cross ceased. ¹² I would they were even cut off {*amputated or taken away*} which trouble you” (Galatians 5:1-12).

The believer who understands the *Sacramental View* of water baptism understands that the person who believes this is NOT trusting in Christ’s finished sacrifice. Faith in Christ has been misdirected to faith in water baptism. The *Sacramental View* of the New Covenant ordinance is no different from the efficacious view of the Old Covenant animal sacrifices. This view is condemned and rejected numerous times by Christ and the Apostles.

“¹⁵ We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, ¹⁶ Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Galatians 2:15-16).

If circumcision, as part of the “works of the law,” was replaced by infant baptism (and there is no such testimony anywhere in the Word of God), we see that the emphatic testimony of the inspired words of Scripture, as recorded by the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:16, is that such “works” do not justify anyone before God.

“¹ For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. ⁴ For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. ⁵ Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me: ⁶ In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hast had no pleasure” (Hebrews 10:1-6).

John Calvin gives us the classic *Sacramental View* of infant baptism that dominates Reformed Theology and Covenant (Replacement) Theology. Here again a presupposition dominates his reasoning. The presupposition is that children of covenant people, such as the Jews, were sealed by their circumcision into a *Covenant of Salvation*. For any reasonable person, this presupposition poses a considerable problem in that only the male children of the Jews were circumcised. Does this then preclude Jewish girl children from the *Covenant of Salvation*?

“5. Now, if we are to investigate whether or not baptism is justly given to infants, will we not say that the man trifles, or rather is delirious, who would stop short at the element of water, and the external observance, and not allow his mind to rise to the spiritual mystery? If reason is listened to, it will undoubtedly appear that baptism is properly administered to infants as a thing due to them. The Lord did not anciently bestow circumcision upon them without making them partakers of all the things signified by circumcision. He would have deluded his people with mere imposture, had he quieted them with fallacious symbols: the very idea is shocking. He distinctly declares, that the circumcision of the infant will be instead of a seal of the promise of the covenant. But if the covenant remains firm and fixed, it is no less applicable to the children of Christians in the present day, than to the children of the Jews under the Old Testament. Now, if they are partakers of the thing signified, how can they be denied the sign? If they obtain the reality, how can they be refused the figure? The external sign is so united in the sacrament with the word, that it cannot be separated from it: but if they can be separated, to which of the two shall we attach the greater value? Surely, when we see that the sign is subservient to the word, we shall say that it is subordinate, and assign it the inferior place. Since, then, the word of baptism is destined for infants, why should we deny them the sign, which is an appendage of the word? This one reason, could no other be furnished, would be amply sufficient to refute all gainsayers.”³ (*The “gainsayers” that Calvin refers to are the Anabaptists.*)

³ Calvin, John: *The Institutes of the Christian Religion* translated by Henry Beveridge, (Grand Rapids, MI, Christian Classics Ethereal Library, Public Domain, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.html>) page 809

It is necessary that we interject a biblical correction to the presupposition that the Jew entered into the Covenant of Abraham through circumcision. This is just not true. The Abrahamic Covenant was given in Genesis 12:1-3 in 1950 B.C. The Abrahamic Covenant was not instituted until thirty-seven years later (1921 B.C.) in Genesis chapter fifteen. There we are told “And he {*Abraham*} believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Genesis 15:6). Abraham was not circumcised until eleven years later in Genesis 17:24. Circumcision had nothing to do with the Abrahamic Covenant. One enters the Abrahamic Covenant by faith, not by circumcision or water baptism, infant or otherwise. Faith, totally apart from the “works of the law,” is the common denominator for anyone to enter the Abrahamic Covenant.

⁶ Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

⁷ Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. ⁸ And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, *saying*, In thee shall all nations be blessed. ⁹ So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham. ¹⁰ For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them. ¹¹ But that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, *it is* evident: for, The just shall live by faith. ¹² And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. ¹³ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree: ¹⁴ That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. ¹⁵ Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though *it be* but a man’s covenant, yet *if it be* confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. ¹⁶ Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. ¹⁷ And this I say, *that* the covenant {*of ‘salvation “by grace through faith”*}, that was confirmed before of God in Christ {*Genesis 3:15, 15:17; Revelation 13:8*}, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. ¹⁸ For if the inheritance *be* of the law, *it is* no more of promise: but God gave *it* to Abraham by promise” (Galatians 3:6-18).

After all, Reformed Theology is reformed Roman Catholicism. The *Sacramental View* of infant baptism in Reformed Theology is a reformed view of Roman Catholic infant baptism. Common factors are the *consecration of the water* through saying the proper words invoking the Trinity making the water *sacred*. The second common factor is that of *vicarious faith* on the part of the parents or godparents on behalf of the child. There are a number of aspects of Roman Catholic infant baptism excluded from the rite in Reformed churches (see quote below).

“The rites that accompany the baptismal ablution are as ancient as they are beautiful. The writings of the early Fathers and the antique liturgies show that most of them are derived from Apostolic times.

The infant is brought to the door of the church by the sponsors {*new born infants are viewed as of the devil until baptized*}, where it is met by the priest. After the godparents have asked faith from the Church of God in the child’s name, the priest breathes upon its face and exorcises the evil spirit. St. Augustine (Ep. cxciv, Ad Sixtum) makes use of this Apostolic practice of exorcising to prove the existence of original sin. Then the infant’s forehead and breast are signed with the cross, the symbol of redemption.

Next follows the imposition of hands, a custom certainly as old as the Apostles. Some blessed salt is now placed in the mouth of the child. ‘When salt’, says the Catechism of the Council of Trent ‘is put into the mouth of person to be baptized, it evidently imports that, by the doctrine of faith and the gift of grace, he should be delivered from the corruption of sin, experience a relish for good works, and be delighted with the food of divine wisdom.’

Placing his stole over the child the priest introduces it into the church, and on the way to the font the sponsors make a profession of faith for the infant. The priest now touches the ears and nostrils of the child with spittle. The symbolic meaning is thus explained (Cat. C. Trid.) ‘His nostrils and ears are next touched with spittle and he is immediately sent to the baptismal font, that, as sight was restored to the blind man mentioned in the Gospel, whom the Lord, after having spread clay over his eyes, commanded to wash them in the waters of Siloe; so also he may understand that the efficacy of the sacred ablution is such as to bring light to the mind to discern heavenly truth.’

The catechumen now makes the triple renunciation of Satan, his works and his pomps, and he is anointed with the oil of catechumens on the breast and between the shoulders: ‘On the breast, that by the gift of the Holy Ghost, he may cast off error and ignorance and may receive the true faith, ‘for the just man liveth by faith’ (Galatians 3:11); on the shoulders, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit, he may shake off negligence and torpor and engage in the performance of good works; ‘faith without works is dead’ (James 2:26)’, says the Catechism.

The infant now, through its sponsors, makes a declaration of faith and asks for baptism. The priest, having meantime changed his violet stole for a white one, then administers the threefold ablution, making the sign of the cross three times with the stream of water he pours on the head of the child, saying at the same time: ‘N___, I baptize thee in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost.’ The sponsors during the ablution either hold the child or at least touch it. If the baptism be given by immersion, the priest dips the back part of the head three times into the water in the form of a cross, pronouncing the sacramental words. The crown of the child’s head is now anointed with chrism, ‘to give him to understand that from that day he is united as a member to Christ, his head, and engrafted on His body; and therefore he is called a Christian from Christ, but Christ from chrism’ (Catech.). A white veil is now put on the infant’s head with the words: ‘Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry without stain before the judgment seat of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that thou mayest have eternal life. Amen.’ Then a lighted candle is placed in the catechumen’s hand, the priest saying: ‘Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame. Observe the commandments of God; that, when Our Lord shall come to His nuptials, thou mayest meet Him together with all the Saints and mayest have life everlasting, and live for ever and ever. Amen.’ The new Christian is then bidden to go in peace.”⁴ (underling and items in { } added)

⁴ *New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia*, Baptism: Ceremonies of Baptism (<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm>)

Alexander Hislop quotes from Prescott's book *Mexico*, volume III, pages 339-340 about Roman Catholic missionaries in Mexico about the practice of infant baptism among the pagan Indians. Remember, as you read this, what is being described is not the *infant baptism* as commonly practiced within paganized Christianity, but is part of the ancient rituals of pagan Sun worship. The Roman Catholic missionaries were astonished by the pagan practice that they saw being administered before their eyes because of the degree of similarity it had to their own ritual practices of infant baptism.

“When everything necessary for the baptism had been made ready, all the relations of the child were assembled, and the midwife, who was the person that performed the rite of baptism, was summoned. At early dawn, they met together in the court-yard of the house. When the sun had risen, the midwife, taking the child in her arms, called for a earthen vessel of water, while those about her placed the ornaments, which had been prepared for baptism, in the midst of the court. To perform the rite of baptism, she placed herself with her face toward the west, and immediately began to go through certain ceremonies . . . After this she sprinkled water on the head of the infant, saying, ‘O my child, take and receive the water of the Lord of the world, which is our life, which is given for the increasing and renewing of our body. It is to wash and to purify. I pray that these heavenly drops may enter into your body and dwell there; that they may destroy and remove from you all the evil and sin which was given you before the beginning of the world, since all of us are under its power . . .’ She then washed the body of the child with water, and spoke in this manner: ‘Whencesoever thou comest, thou that art hurtful to this child, leave him and depart from him, for he now liveth anew, and is born anew; now he is purified and cleansed afresh, and our mother Chalchivitlycue [the goddess of water] bringeth him into the world.’ Having thus prayed, the midwife took the child in both hands, and, lifting him towards heaven, said, ‘O Lord {*speaking to her form of the Sun god, Wodin*}, thou seest here thy creature, whom thou hast sent into the world, this place of sorrow, suffering, and penitence. Grant him, O Lord, thy gifts and inspiration, for thou art the great God, and with thee is the great goddess.’”⁵ (text in { } is added)

The presupposition of both adult baptismal regeneration and infant baptismal regeneration is that water baptism effects the baptism with the Holy Spirit. In other words, the baptism with the Holy Spirit results from and proceeds from water baptism. This presupposition can easily be rejected because this is not what we find in the evidence of Scripture testimonies.

⁵ Hislop, Alexander, *The Two Babylons or The Papal Worship* (Loizeaux Brothers, Bible Truth Depot, Neptune, N.J.) page 133