

After reading this, you will see that the practice of infant baptism is not only thoroughly biblical, it is rooted in the Apostles, as is testified to by all of those Christians writing before there was even an established "Bible" itself. I will explain this in three sections: (1) The Real Issue behind Infant Baptism; (2) The Biblical Testimony; and (3) Early Christian Witness.

I. The Real Issue Behind Infant Baptism:

The main issue behind infant baptism is the following: How are we saved? Are we saved through our own faith or are we saved by the grace of God? During the time of the Reformation (in the 16th century, that is, 1500 years after Christ!), the issue was first raised that humans must *first reach the age of reason, then they must believe in Jesus Christ as their personal savior*, and it is this acceptance *of faith* that saves the person. Baptism can then be conferred upon that person in order to symbolize that commitment. This is contrary to biblical teaching and the practice of the historic (i.e., Catholic) church. In Catholicism (from the time of the Apostles), we believe that there are *no conditions upon salvation*, that it is *a free gift from God*. God is not limited by our attainment of "reason" or our acceptance and understanding of "faith." When do we really understand the faith enough to be saved? When have we really *achieved* enough understanding to say that now we finally qualify to be saved, whereas before we didn't? Is God's grace so powerful that not even age or understanding can limit his saving power? Some churches say you must be 13, others 18, others 21, etc., but these are ambiguous conditions placed on God's saving power --- a real saving power, that isn't just about a "deepened understanding," but is about whether or not you are truly *reborn in Christ* in a literal sense. The same way that you had no control over your first birth, and it is an entire gift, then your second birth in Christ - no matter how much understanding you have, no matter how old you are - is even more of a total gift that is not dependent upon any conditions, such as age, reason, understanding, etc. There are three main issues at stake in infant baptism: (1) what is most at stake in the question of infant baptism is the utter gratuity of salvation from God, given as a total gift, without conditions. And (2) How are we saved? Are we saved through our own profession of faith and are we "reborn" only figuratively? Or are we saved by being reborn in God literally, so that we take new life from him? (3) By what source do we determine the way in which we read and understand the Bible? If someone today differs from the received tradition of interpretation that originated in the time of the Apostles and has been handed on generation by generation, should we just accept that alternative interpretation or should we root our understanding of the Bible in the practices and teachings of the early Christian churches that gave us the Bible in the first place? These are the theological differences. This is the context of the Catholic and Protestant debate.

Here are the differences in response:

Issues	Catholics	Evangelical Protestants
(1) what is most at stake in the question of infant baptism is the utter gratuity of salvation from God, given as a total gift, without conditions	Catholics believe that salvation is an utter gift from God with no conditions, since salvation is God sharing with us his own life of love.	Protestants believe that salvation is conditioned upon (1) the attainment of reason; (2) the attainment of an understanding of faith; and (3) the personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior.
And (2) How are we saved? Are we saved through our own profession of faith and are we "reborn" only figuratively? Or are we saved by being reborn in God literally, so that we take new life from him?	Catholics believe that we are saved by faith and baptism. Catholics interpret Romans 5-8 in light of John 3, where Jesus says "Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit" (3:5). Baptism is thus a "sacrament": it is a <i>sign</i> that effects that which it signifies, meaning that the water, which signifies cleansing, through the Holy Spirit, effects that cleansing in fact on the human being, without condition, since it is the <i>work of God</i> , and not the work of man.	Protestants believe that only faith is saving; baptism is only a representation of your commitment in faith. Protestants base their entire religion upon Romans 5-8; and then, Protestants attempt to say that John 3 is only speaking metaphorically, but not literally. Protestants therefore do not believe that baptism is a sacrament in this way.
(3) By what source do we determine the way in which we read and understand the Bible? If someone today differs from the received tradition of interpretation that originated in the time of the Apostles and has been handed	Catholics believe that we must interpret the Bible in accordance with the Holy Spirit who inspired the Scriptures and in the context of the faith of the Church which gave rise to the Scriptures in the first place.	Protestants believe in <i>sola scriptura</i> , the Bible alone; that one does not need the Church to interpret the Bible. Protestants believe in two things: (1) that the Bible is inspired in such a way that if you read it you will get the

on generation by generation, should we just accept that alternative interpretation or should we root our understanding of the Bible in the practices and teachings of the early Christian churches that gave us the Bible in the first place?	This means that there is no <i>personal</i> interpretation in Catholicism, there is only the interpretation of the Church, as it has been handed down to us, through the ages. The Bible was written <i>in the Church, for the Church, by the Church</i> . As such, we must read it with the faith of the Church, which has been handed down to us through the Apostolic tradition.	meaning that you are supposed to; and (2) that every believer has the Holy Spirit present in such a way that he or she, by him or herself, can interpret the Scriptures correctly. Every Protestant interpretation is therefore <i>individual</i> and <i>personal</i> .
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II. Biblical Testimony:

Protestants oftentimes insist that there is no testimony in the New Testament of the practice of infant baptism. On this basis, they conclude that only adults are to be baptized. Let us examine this argument and let us examine the biblical evidence:

(1) The Status of Baptism:

Read *John 3:3-5*: “3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above.” 4 Nicodemus said to him, “How can a person once grown old be born again? Surely he cannot reenter his mother’s womb and be born again, can he? 5 Jesus answered, “Amen, amen, I say to you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit.”

*Notice that Jesus makes a very universal and bold claim: *no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of **water and Spirit***. He does not limit his claim to adults, as if to say, *no adults can enter the kingdom of God...*, he doesn’t limit his claim to those who have reached the age of reason or who have accepted Jesus Christ as their personal savior, as if he would have said: *no adult who has reached the age of reason can be saved unless he accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Lord and Savior*. Rather, the text is explicit: *no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of **water and Spirit***, that is, unless that person is baptized.

Baptism, for St. Paul, is not understood metaphorically either. Read St. Paul’s passage in *Romans 6:3-5*: “Or are you unaware that we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were indeed buried with him through baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might live in newness of life. 5 For if we have grown into union with him through a death like his, we shall also be united with him in the resurrection.”

*Notice that St. Paul is not speaking metaphorically; for him, when we submerge in the waters of baptism, we are literally crucified with Christ into his death, and when we emerge from the baptismal waters, we are raised to newness of life in Christ's resurrection. There is nothing here about conditions or personal acceptance of faith as a condition.

(2) Baptism and Children in the Bible

(A) We have seen in the previous section that baptism is not merely an “add-on” to one's acceptance of Christ in faith, but that baptism is where salvation happens. There is no kingdom of God apart from baptism. Thus, whenever the scriptures speak of someone attaining to the kingdom of God, we need to understand that as involving baptism. We can see this when the Apostle Peter's open declaration in Acts 2:38-39: “Thus Peter declared, “Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you *and to your children*.”

*Notice that the promise of forgiveness of sins, which is extended through *baptism* – “every one of you” – is not only for the adult hearers (“for you”) but also for their children (“*and to your children*”).

(B) The context for baptism can be understood in terms of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. We believe that it is *one and the same God* who created the world, revealed himself through the prophets of the Old Testament, and who revealed himself fully in the person of his Son through the incarnation. We saw in this the prologue of the Gospel of John, wherein it speaks about the relationship between God the Father and God the Word, and how the Word became flesh and revealed to us the glory of the Father. This shows that the Old Testament and the New Testament hinge together through the *one God*. This idea is most beautifully emphasized in the opening lines of the *Letter to the Hebrews 1:1-4*:

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets;
in these last days, he spoke to us through a son,
whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,
who is the refulgence of his glory,
the very imprint of his being,
and who sustains all things by his mighty word.
When he had accomplished purification from sins,
he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,
as far superior to the angels
as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

This means that there is a very special relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We do not just do away with what is revealed in the Old Testament, we fulfill it because we see it as pointing towards Christ, as having its ultimate meaning in Christ. This is why Christ says regarding the Laws of Moses in the Old Testament: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place” (*Matthew 5:17-18*). This means that the Old Testament has two layers of meaning: one for its specific context of revealing God to the people of Israel, and another, deeper “spiritual” meaning that is fulfilled in Christ. This has a direct bearing on the question of baptism.

In the Old Testament, circumcision was the practice by which someone was brought into the community of the faithful. Without circumcision, a person in the Old Testament could not partake of God’s promises and his covenant with his people. Circumcision is the *sign* and *seal* of God’s covenant with the people of Israel. In the Old Testament, it was commanded of the Jewish people to circumcise their children on their 8th day of life. I ask you --- how did that Jewish child choose or believe in anything, and yet, through God’s own commandment, this child was brought into the promise of God, freely and gratuitously. The child did not *become* a Jew after reaching the age of reason and accepting a proclamation of faith; the child did not *become* part of God’s saving covenant only after that point. Rather, the child, since its infancy, was part of God’s saving covenant, through baptism, because God’s free gift of his covenant is utterly his gift and it is not conditioned by our age, status, or understanding. Inevitably, Jewish children grew up, not striving to understanding in order that they might receive God’s covenant, but grew up striving to give thanks and understand what God had already freely given them.

When it comes to the New Testament, we need to keep in mind the categories of “type” and “fulfillment.” Things are written in the Old Testament as “types,” as foreshadows of what is to be fulfilled in the New Testament. This is why St. Paul writes in his *Letter to the Colossians* 2:11-12, “In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not administered by hand, by stripping off the carnal body, with the circumcision of Christ. You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.” The “in him” is referring to “in Christ.” Notice what this passage is saying: In Christ, we are circumcised like the Jews, however, we are not circumcised according to the flesh through the cutting off of the foreskin of a boy’s member, rather, we are circumcised with the “circumcision of Christ,” which is baptism. Our entrance into the New Testament covenant, which is the lasting and eternal covenant, that is, the covenant sealed with Christ’s own blood, is through our “circumcision of Christ,” which is our baptism. *And just as circumcision in the Old Testament was commanded to be given to infants to be brought into the covenant that God had provided for his people, it is also given to infants in the New Testament because God freely gives a share of his covenant without prior conditions in the recipient.*

(C) One may ask why there is not more *explicit* reference to the baptism of infants in the New Testament. Some protestants have made the claim thus: *If infant baptism were a demanded practice by the Scriptures, it would have been more explicitly demanded, and since we do not find it in the scriptures as explicitly as it should be, then we should not practice it.* This is the protestant position. There are countless problems with this position.

Even though the Scriptures do not contain the practice of infant baptism *as explicitly as protestants would like*, this does not mean that the Scripture *only* proscribes the baptism of adults. It stands to reason that, within the first generation of Christianity's existence, while it is spreading throughout the Roman empire, the ones brought into the Church are converted Jews and Gentiles, which are adults, being converted by the preaching of the Gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. But, more importantly, ***nowhere in the New Testament do we see anything that indicates that children of Christian families had to grow into the age of reason and come to profess the Christian faith before they were baptized.*** In every situation in which a family was brought into the Christian faith, it says that the whole "household" was baptized. Take this passage, for example, about when St. Paul baptized not only a man, but his "household," that is, "all his family," as recorded in *Acts 16:25-34*:

25 About midnight, while Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God as the prisoners listened, 26 there was suddenly such a severe earthquake that the foundations of the jail shook; all the doors flew open, and the chains of all were pulled loose. 27 When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew [his] sword and was about to kill himself, thinking that the prisoners had escaped. 28 But Paul shouted out in a loud voice, "Do no harm to yourself; we are all here." 29 He asked for a light and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you **and your household** will be saved." 32 So they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to everyone in his house. 33 **He took them in at that hour of the night and bathed their wounds; then he and all his family were baptized at once.** 34 He brought them up into his house and provided a meal and with his household rejoiced at having come to faith in God."

This is what the New Testament indicates; that a man who was converted to the faith was not baptized by himself, but "all his family" was baptized with him "at once." This does not simply mean his adult wife, this includes all of his family. If infant baptism was not supposed to be understood, then why doesn't the passage say: "the man was baptized and when his children grew to accept the faith, they were then baptized too"? --- It doesn't say that because that is not the Biblical teaching.

In another passage that testifies to the baptism of a whole household, St. Paul opens his letter to the Church of the Corinthians by speaking about those who he himself had baptized into Christ's body: "I give thanks [to God] that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, so that no one can say you were baptized in my name. I baptized the household of Stephanas also; beyond that I do not know whether I baptized anyone else" (1 Corinthians 1:14-16). Once again, we see the practice of baptizing not only the one who was converted to Christianity, but also that person's family, including his children. The Greek word used in these passages for "household" is οἶκος, which means one's entire household family, not excluding children.

Conclusions regarding the Biblical Testimony

All of this amounts to saying a few things: (1) the predominate amount of baptisms recounted in the New Testament are reasonably those of adults, since the New Testament recounts the initial spread of the Gospel during a time in which, families were not already Christian, but Christianity existed only through converting Jews and Gentiles. There was no such thing at this time as someone being "born" into a Christian family; Christianity had just began to exist, and as such, everyone who entered to faith was an adult convert. (2) In the few occasions where the Bible speaks of households entering into the Christian faith, it states that the entire household was baptized, including children. (3) The New Testament is also clear that there are no conditions placed upon God for baptism, such as age, understanding, or profession of personal faith; rather, baptism is the free gift of God's saving power that extends unto us the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. (4) The New Testament is also clear about associating the practices of baptism and circumcision, both of which are decisions on behalf of parents and the community to bring a child in God's covenant without placing conditions upon God, but based only on God's free and unconditioned love. (5) Nowhere in the New Testament do we see what protestants claim, namely that a child must first grow up to be baptized. There is not one, not a single passage in which a family entered the Christian faith and the baptism of the child was deferred until that child could profess the faith him or herself. This is an imposition on the text, nowhere to be found in the Bible or in the history of its interpretation, until the 16th century (that is, over 1500 years after the birth of Christ).

(3) Early Christian Witness

The first *explicit* evidence of children of believing households being baptized comes from the early Church—where infant baptism was uniformly upheld and regarded as apostolic. Remember that if there is anything for certain about the Christian faith, it is that Jesus precedes the Church and that the Church precedes the Scriptures, such that you get an historical (and theological) arrangement of:

Jesus as Word made flesh → the Church as *his body* → the Scriptures

If you notice, Paul's epistles – the earliest part of the New Testament – was written to *already existing churches*. Protestants are oftentimes under the allusion that the process goes something like this:

Jesus as Word made flesh → the Scriptures → the Church

And based on that understanding, they read the Scriptures *in order to form the church*, and it is on the basis of those scriptures that they think that other churches, such as the Catholic Church, has deviated by misreading the scriptures. This is a very dangerous confusion, because it is not historically accurate. A general chronology goes something like this:

Year	Event/ Writing
4 BC – 0 AD	Birth of Christ
27-30 AD to 30-33AD	Jesus' three years of public ministry, which began with the Wedding at Cana.
30 – 33 AD	Death of Christ, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ. Pentecost. This is the Theological beginning of the Church in two key events: (1) the blood and water that flowed from Christ's side while on the cross, which indicates baptism and the Eucharist; and (2) the sending of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. ---- There were twelve Apostles, one was selected to take Judas' place. All of this is recorded in the Book of <i>Acts</i> , written by Luke between the years 80-100. The Apostles went on different missions and established churches throughout the Roman empire, ranging from Judea to Rome (where Peter himself was martyred).
33-36 AD	The conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul. Paul went on several missionary journeys and established churches throughout Asia minor.
45-67 AD	The Epistles of St Paul are the earliest part of the New Testament writings. They were written as letters to the churches that he founded, in order to guide them in the faith that he handed them. Paul was martyred in 67 AD in Rome.
65-80 AD	Gospel of Mark was written in Rome by Mark, who was not an Apostle, but the Apostle Peter's companion.
70 AD	This marks the year that the Romans destroyed the Jewish temple: it still stands in ruins from this destruction till this very day.
70-100	Epistle of James written.
80-100	Gospel of Matthew written.
80-110	1 Peter written
80-110	Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts written, by Luke, who was the "beloved physician" of St. Paul.
90-120	Gospel of John; 1, 2, & 3 John written. Also, the Book of Revelation was written around this time, but by a different "John."

Now this is just a sampling of when some of the main texts were written. But you need to remember something: (1) the churches already existed; these texts were written *for the church, by the church, and in the church*. (2) These writings were written in different places and at

different times, such that there are certain churches that had one Gospel, but not another; one letter of St. Paul, but not the others, etc. *There was no complete bible, regarded as a completed and inspired book, without error, from God.* (3) The writings that eventually came to form the Bible were not the only ones written at that time. I did not mention any of the other writings in the above list, but take these, for example:

Year	Event/ Figure	Significance
50-120	Didache	This document predates any of the Gospels and reports the practices of an early Christian community established by the apostles.
80-120	Epistle of Barnabas	This letter was written during the time of the Apostles
80-140	1 Clement	Clement wrote this letter to the Church in Rome, and he was apprenticed under St. Paul. Paul writes of him in his <i>Letter to the Philippians</i> , and says that he was his “yolkmate” and his “co-worker,” and that his name is “written in the book of life” (<i>Phil 4:3</i>).
105-115	Ignatius of Antioch	Ignatius was trained by the Apostle John and he was consecrated as the third Bishop of Antioch. He wrote seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor. His letters emphasize the importance of the Bishop <i>as the successor to the Apostles</i> and the importance of the Eucharist.
130-160	2 Clement	This Clement lived in Rome and he was the successor to St. Peter as the Bishop of Rome.
165-175	Melito of Sardis	This writer preached on the death of Jesus as our paschal lamb. His writings are beautiful.
175-180	Athenagoras of Athens	He was an early defender of the Christian faith against Greek philosophers.
175-185	Irenaeus of Lyons* (quoted below)	Irenaeus was the first and most important systematic theologian in the early Church. He was also the first writer to have and make a case for the four Gospels.
175-185	Theophilus of Caesarea	Important Greek writer, the first to use the word “Trinity.”
180-230	Hippolytus of Rome* (quoted below)	Important Greek writer, who wrote a lot on the liturgy, and he explained the practice of the Eucharist in the early Church.
182-202	Clement of Alexandria	He wrote about Christian teaching in the early Church.
197-220	Tertullian	He was the first Latin speaking Christian; he was killed for the Christian faith. He also defended the importance of the body in the

		resurrection and the unity of the Old and New Testaments.
203-250	Origen* (quoted below)	Origen was the most brilliant of theologians before the Council of Nicaea. He wrote biblical commentaries and systematic treatises. But his bible was still not a completed and final version. Some of his books are different than ours.
? - 258	Cyprian of Carthage* (quoted below)	Important Latin Bishop.
296-373	Athanasius of Alexandria	Incredibly important Bishop who defended that Jesus Christ is God made flesh, and that God is a Trinity against Arius, who said that Jesus was a creature.
325	COUNCIL OF NICAEA	MOST IMPORTANT EVENT IN THE EARLY CHURCH: FROM THIS WE RECEIVE: THE NICENE CREED & THE BIBLE AS A COMPLETED BOOK
329-390	Gregory of Nazianzus	Theologian who wrote a lot on the Trinity.
381	COUNCIL OF CONSTANTINOPLE	IMPORTANT COUNCIL: WE RECEIVE THE FINAL VERSION OF THE CREED WHICH EMPHASIZES THE DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT AS PART OF THE TRINITY.
347-407	John Chrysostom* (quoted below)	Great preacher, emphasized social justice.
354-430	Augustine of Hippo* (quoted below)	Greatest Latin-writing theologian in history. Wrote on every possible subject.
416	Council of Mileum II * (quoted below)	Small council in Rome.
419	Council of Carthage V * (quoted below)	Small council in North Africa.
430	COUNCIL OF EPHESUS	IMPORTANT COUNCIL THAT DECLARED JESUS TO BE GOD, AND THEREFORE, MARY TO BE THE MOTHER OF GOD.
451	COUNCIL OF CHALCEDON	IMPORTANT COUNCIL THAT DECLARED JESUS AS BOTH FULLY GOD AND MAN, WITHOUT CONFUSION AND INTERMINGLING.

This is a brief overview of the early Christian tradition. There are a few important things to note as regards the issue of infant baptism: (1) the Bible as a completed book did not appear until the Council of Nicaea in the year 325, wherein 318 Bishops (that is, successors to the Apostles), attended; (2) Every single one of these theologians believed one thing regarding their interpretation of the Scriptures: *that they must interpret the scriptures in accordance with the faith of the Church*. The faith of the Church is what gave rise to the Scriptures; it is the faith of

the Apostolic church that led to the writing of the Scriptures and the faith of the Church handed down by the Apostles that finally determined which books are in the Bible and which ones aren't. The Bible is a Church-book, and cannot be understood outside of that context.

As regards infant baptism in the early Church

Every writer in the early Church who wrote on the matter unequivocally claims that infant baptism was a practice handed down from the Apostles themselves. Within the early Church period, there was only *one* issue regarding infant baptism. The issue was *not* whether it should happen or not; rather, the issue was as follows: given the association of baptism with circumcision in the Old Testament, and given that in the Old Testament the Israelites were supposed to wait until the 8th day in order to circumcise their children, are Christians supposed to wait 8 days after a child is born in order to baptize them on that day. This is a question that comes up in the third century, during the time when St. Cyprian was bishop of Carthage, in North Africa. As you can see from the question, the issue *was not whether there should or should not be infant baptism*, but rather *whether they infants should be baptized as soon as they are born or on their eighth day of life*. The first time that someone stated that infants should not be baptized was 1500 years later, with the teachings of Zwingli and his Ana-Baptist movement. I have compiled a list of quotes for you below from the early Church so that you can read them yourself. I placed the date of the writing in brackets next to the name. Each of these figures is listed in the above chart so that you can see them in a general chronology. As you read each of these figures, try to remember the first section of this document that indicated what truly is the real issue behind infant baptism. You will see that the issue here is regarding the utter gratuity of God's free gift and the effectiveness of God's grace through baptism, without conditions. Also, you will see that they are all concerned with keeping the faith *as it was handed to them by the Apostles*.

Irenaeus of Lyon [189 AD]

"He [Jesus] came to save all through himself; all, I say, who through him are reborn in God: infants, and children, and youths, and old men. Therefore he passed through every age, becoming an infant for infants, sanctifying infants; a child for children, sanctifying those who are of that age . . . [so that] he might be the perfect teacher in all things, perfect not only in respect to the setting forth of truth, perfect also in respect to relative age" (*Against Heresies* 2:22:4 [A.D. 189]).

"'And [Naaman] dipped himself . . . seven times in the Jordan' [2 Kgs. 5:14]. It was not for nothing that Naaman of old, when suffering from leprosy, was purified upon his being baptized, but [this served] as an indication to us. For as we are lepers in sin, we are made clean, by means of the sacred water and the invocation of the Lord, from our old transgressions, being spiritually regenerated as newborn babes, even as the Lord has declared: 'Except a man be born again

through water and the Spirit, he shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven' [John 3:5]" (*Fragment*34 [A.D. 190]).

Hippolytus [215 AD]

"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]).

Origen [248 AD]

"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]).

Cyprian of Carthage [253 AD]

"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).

Gregory of Nazianzus [388 AD]

"**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).

John Chrysostom [388 AD]

"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]).

Augustine [400; 408 AD; 412]

"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]).

Council of Carthage V [401 AD]

"*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]).

Council of Mileum II [416 AD]

"[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]).