

INFANT BAPTISM: UPHOLDING ITS PRACTICE IN THE PROVINCE OF THE CHURCH OF UGANDA

MARK INUA

M21B09/028

**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE BISHOP TUCKER SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY IN
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF
BACHELOR OF DIVINITY OF UGANDA CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY**

September, 2025



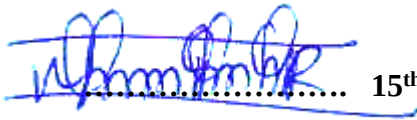
**UGANDA CHRISTIAN
UNIVERSITY**

A Centre of Excellence in the Heart of Africa

DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this research paper to be submitted to Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology at Uganda Christian University is solely my own work, reflecting my own efforts and understanding.

Sign

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Inua Mark', written over a dotted line.

15th September 2025

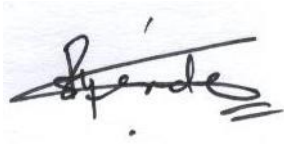
INUA MARK

M21B09/028

APPROVAL

This Research Paper has been under my supervision and is now ready for submission to Authorities of Uganda Christian University Examination with my approval.

Sign

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nyende', with a horizontal line drawn above it and a double underline below it.

Date: 15th September 2025

Professor Peter Nyende

Supervisor

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research paper to my dear wife, Patricia Inua, whose unwavering love, encouragement, and prayers have been my constant source of strength throughout this journey. Her patience, support, and belief in me made this work possible

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to express my sincere thanks to the Lord our God for the successful completion of this research paper. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my dear wife, Patricia Inua, for her unwavering support, consistent prayers, and the resilience she demonstrated throughout my time at Uganda Christian University, Mukono. Her strength and care for our family have been a constant source of comfort to me.

Special thanks are due to Professor Peter Nyende, my supervisor, for his guidance, commitment, and patience, all of which greatly contributed to the successful completion of this work.

I would also like to acknowledge the support I received from the Christians of St. Philip's CoU–Moroto Deanery under the able leadership of their Sub-Dean, whose guidance and mentorship skills shaped my ministry, especially during my days off campus. I should not forget the Christians and staff of St. George in the UK, especially Martyn Taylor, who supported me financially with accommodation and meals throughout my three years of study at Uganda Christian University.

Lastly, I would like to express my gratitude to my dear friends and classmates, Rev. Patrick Katuramu and Rev. Emmanuel Omar Awacha, for their unwavering support throughout my theological training journey. Your friendship has always been a source of strength and encouragement.

ABSTRACT

This paper examines and upholds infant baptism in the Church of Uganda within its biblical, historical, theological, and pastoral context. It considers scriptural foundations such as circumcision and baptism, covenant promises, household baptisms, and Jesus' welcome of children. It also surveys early Church history, showing that infant baptism was practiced and affirmed by figures like Irenaeus, Origen, Hippolytus, and the Council of Carthage. The study engages objections from biblical interpretation, history, and theology, including concerns about personal faith and freedom of choice. In response, it argues that baptism signifies God's covenantal grace rather than human decision, and that including children in the Church's sacramental life reflects Scripture and tradition. Highlighting theological, pastoral, and missionary dimensions, the paper concludes that infant baptism remains both valid and essential to the life and witness of the Church of Uganda.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
APPROVAL.....	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	v
Section I. Introduction	1
Section II. Infant Baptism in the Bible	3
Section III. Infant Baptism in History	6
Section IV. Objections to Infant Baptism in the Bible.....	7
Section V. Objections to infant Baptism in history and contemporary.....	10
Objections in History:	10
Contemporary Objections:	10
Section VI. In support of infant Baptism	12
Section VII. Conclusion	19
Bibliography	22

Infant Baptism: Upholding its practice in the Province of the Church of Uganda

Section I. Introduction

The Christian Church today is marked by a great diversity of denominations, each interpreting and practicing the sacraments in different ways. Among the most debated is the rite of baptism, particularly the question of whether it should be administered to infants or reserved for adults. The former is referred to as infant baptism or paedobaptism and the latter is called credo baptism.¹

Infant baptism, also known as paedobaptism, is more than just a symbolic ritual. It is a sacramental practice that involves the practice of baptizing infants or young children. It has been embraced by the majority of Christian traditions throughout history in an attempt to align with the New Testament model of baptism of including children within the Church community.² According to Ben. L. Rose, infant baptism is an acknowledgement of Church membership. The infant by this rite is accepted as a Church member, which is the Lord's congregation, the household and God's family.³ In this sense, baptism is less about the infant's personal choice and more about God's grace and the Church's responsibility to nurture faith

Within the Reformed tradition, infant baptism is understood to be covenantal and promissory in nature. The baptized child is included in the life of the church, but is not a full member of the church until he or she is able to confess the faith, thereby claiming the promise of salvation offered in the rite of baptism. Things are rather different for those who come to faith later in life and are baptized as believers (either as adolescents or adults). For in that case, there is a clear relation between belief and the rite: one believes and is baptized. But in the case of infants, it seems that faith follows baptism, often by some years. The idea is that the child is

¹ Wisdom begun. *Infant baptism vs. Adult baptism*. 2025.

² Oliver D. University of St Andrews, Fife, Scotland, UK.p1

³ Ben. L. Rose. *Central Presbyterian Church*. Bristol Tennessee. p9.

baptized in the hope that she will own the faith confessed by her parents in due course, when she reaches the age of reason⁴

The Province of the Church of Uganda, as part of the Anglican Communion in particular has historically upheld the practice of infant baptism, and its significance remains unchanged whenever it is performed on infants. The Church maintains that infants cannot be separated from the divine plan of God and the Anglican rubric in the *Book of Common Prayer*, instructs the church adherents:

That they defer not the baptism of their children longer than the first or second Sunday next after their birth, or other holy-day falling between, unless upon a great and reasonable cause, to be approved by the curate. And also they shall warn them, that without like great cause and necessity they procure not their children to be baptized at home in their houses.

But despite its widespread practice, infant baptism has been without any doubt an objectionable issue for many years among many Christian denominations. Those that do not practice it believe that infant baptism is not necessary due to their own way of interpreting the scripture. They argue that infants are not capable of professing or confessing Jesus, and they maintain the view that a conscious faith is required for baptism, while advocating for the baptism of only adults capable of affirming their faith in Jesus.⁵ Others on the other hand, view infants as sinless and therefore do not need baptism. This variation is a clear indication that there has been a decline in the understanding of infant baptism especially among the evangelical churches and this decline has been attributed to the influence of revivalism in evangelical cycles, and the emphasis on baptism which follows an individual's profession of faith.⁶

This paper, therefore, aims to explain why the practice of infant baptism should be upheld within the Province of the Church of Uganda by fostering a better understanding of it. It begins by introducing and defining the concept of infant baptism. It then examines the practice in both the Bible and Church history. Furthermore, it evaluates the objections raised against

⁴ Oliver D. Crisp. *Infant baptism and the disposition to saving faith*. University of St Andrews, Fife, Scotland, UK .p1

⁵ Ona E. *The validity of Christian Baptism* (Onitsha: Donmark Press, 2000), 112-113. p.36

⁶ David L. Reichelderfer. October 2014. *Understanding Infant Baptism in the Covenant Community of God's People*. Thesis for the Degree of Master of Arts (Religion). Reformed Theological Seminary Charlotte, North Carolina

infant baptism from biblical, historical, and contemporary perspectives. Finally, it concludes by presenting theological, pastoral, and historical arguments and those from silence, all in support of infant baptism.

Section II. Infant Baptism in the Bible

The biblical basis for infant baptism is often drawn by analogy with the Old Testament practice of circumcision. God commanded Abraham to circumcise all male children in his household at eight days old as a sign of the covenant (Genesis 17:10–12). This covenant sign was given before a child could profess faith, showing that God’s promises extended even to infants. Christ himself underwent circumcision at eight days old (Luke 2:21). Wayne Vogt argues that this replacement of circumcision with baptism is one of the strongest supports for infant baptism.⁷

Paul makes a theological connection between circumcision and baptism in Colossians 2:11–14. He speaks of the “circumcision of Christ” (his death on the cross) and explains that believers were “buried with him in baptism and raised with him.” This highlights the continuity between circumcision and baptism as covenant signs, each pointing to God’s work of grace and the believer’s inclusion in His covenant family, as explained further below.

Both circumcision and baptism are covenant signs, outward badges of belonging to God’s family. In the Old Testament, circumcision marked Israel as God’s people, while in the New Testament; baptism marks those in Christ’s covenant community. Neither act itself creates the relationship with God but points to the deeper reality of belonging to Him.

Both signify inclusion. Circumcision was given to Israelite boys shortly after birth, showing they were part of God’s people from the start. In the same way, infant baptism brings children into the visible Christian community under God’s promises, even before they can express faith.

⁷ Kenneth Oppong, Tony Ogouma, Peter Obeng Man. *An Evaluation of Infant Baptism*. Department of Religious Education, Valley View University, Ghana, Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya. p.21

Both are linked to faith. Abraham's circumcision was called a seal of the righteousness that comes by faith (Romans 4:11). Baptism also points to faith and union with Christ—confirming belief in adults and expressing trust that infants will grow into covenant faith. Both symbolize cleansing. Circumcision hinted at the need for a purified heart, turning from sin toward God. Baptism makes this imagery clearer, as water signifies washing away sin and beginning new life through the Holy Spirit.⁸ Circumcision was intended for the children of believing parents. Through Jesus Christ, baptism now serves as the replacement for circumcision. Consequently, baptism remains for the children of believing parents, as well as for new adult believers.⁹

The Great Commission provides another foundation. Jesus commanded his disciples: “Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:18). Since children are part of “all nations,” this passage is understood to include them. Nowhere in Scripture does Jesus forbid the baptism of children. As Wayne Vogt points out, those who oppose infant baptism cannot cite any biblical text excluding them. Similarly, in Mark 16:16, belief and baptism are linked with salvation, but children are not exempted from this promise.

The practice of infant baptism finds another basis in the household or *oikos* formula. According to Wayne Vogt, this formula offers strong evidence. The New Testament contains various references to the baptism of entire households (Acts 16:15, Acts 16:33, 1 Corinthians 1:16). It is assumed that such household baptisms would encompass infants and children.

Another significant basis is found in the household or *oikos* formula. According to Wayne Vogt, this formula offers strong evidence. The New Testament contains various references to the baptism of entire households. Examples include Lydia (Acts 16:15), the Philippian jailer

⁸Phillip Kayser. *Read seven Biblical Principles that call for Infant Baptism*. <https://leanpub.com/infant-baptism/read>.

⁹ Scott McKee. *The baptism of children*. Ward Church A Guide for Parents.

(Acts 16:33), and Stephanas (1 Corinthians 1:16). In the Old Testament, when a household entered covenant relationship with God, children were included through circumcision. By parallel, it is assumed that New Testament household baptisms also included infants and children.¹⁰

Peter's sermon at Pentecost reinforces this covenant continuity: "The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off" (Acts 2:38–39). This indicates that God's promises extend to children as well as adults. Similarly, Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:14 teaches that the children of believers are "holy," meaning set apart to God. If God regards them as holy, withholding baptism would contradict their covenant status..

Finally, the attitude of Jesus himself provides support. In Matthew 19:13–15, Jesus welcomed little children, took them in his arms, and blessed them, despite the disciples' attempts to turn them away. Though not directly about baptism, this passage demonstrates Christ's willingness to receive and bless children, even before they could understand. If Jesus blessed them, it follows that the Church should also recognize their inclusion in God's covenant community through baptism.¹¹

¹⁰ Kenneth Oppong, Tony Ogouma, Peter Obeng Man. *An Evaluation of Infant Baptism*. Department of Religious Education, Valley View University, Ghana, Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya. P.22

¹¹ Scott McKee. *The baptism of children*. Ward Church A Guide for Parents. p. 8

Section III. Infant Baptism in History

It is a well-established fact that infant baptism has been widely practiced in the majority of Churches since at least 250 A.D. While not all scholars agree that it existed in the earliest years of the Church, several historical records prior to that date indicate that the baptism of infants was already common in the first and second centuries.¹²

One of the earliest witnesses is Irenaeus, who, writing before his death around 200 A.D., affirmed: *“For He (the Lord) came to save all through Himself—infants, little children, boys, youths, and the elderly—who through Him are born again in God.”* This statement implies that baptism, as the means of new birth, was extended to infants. As Vogt observes, Irenaeus was a student and close friend of Polycarp, who himself had been a disciple of the Apostle John. Thus, less than a century separated Irenaeus from the apostolic age, and his testimony carries significant weight. Moreover, Irenaeus was widely regarded as one of the most doctrinally sound teachers of his time.

A generation later, Origen, who died around 250 A.D., wrote, “The church received from the apostles the tradition to give even little children to baptism.” This statement shows that he regarded infant baptism as an established practice dating back to the apostles, and he felt no need to argue for it.

Also, Tertullian, who died around 225 A.D., while not dismissing infant baptism as invalid after having written extensively on baptism, advised delaying its administration. His concern was that baptized children, and particularly their sponsors, might fail to fulfill their commitments. He wrote: *“Let them (children) come when they are older; let them come when they are able to learn and be taught whether they should come; let them become Christians when they can truly know Christ”*¹³

¹² Wayne Vogt. *The Biblical Substantiation for infant Baptism*. Pastoral-Delegate Conference, Texas-New Mexico. P.6

¹³ Wayne Vogt. *The Biblical Substantiation for infant Baptism*. Pastoral-Delegate Conference, Texas-New Mexico. pp5-6.

Tertullian's advice to delay baptizing infants shows that the practice was already common in his time. His writings also make it clear that infant baptism was not something new, otherwise, he probably would have criticized it for being a recent invention. Since he never made that argument, it suggests that infant baptism was already an accepted tradition, not something the Church or the Apostles had just introduced.

Another important witness, Hippolytus, writing around 215 A.D., stated: "First you should baptize the little ones. Those who can speak for themselves should do so, but for those who cannot, their parents or another family member should speak. Then baptize the grown men, and lastly the women" (*Apostolic Traditions*, 21, 4f). This order of baptism demonstrates that the baptism of infant was common in his time. To deny this would require an unusually strained line of reasoning.

Finally, around 250 A.D., Bishop Fidus raises a question to the Council of Carthage regarding whether baptism should be postponed until the eighth day. The council concluded that it should not be delayed arbitrarily (Epistle 64, 2-6). The very terms of the discussion reveal that infant baptism was already widely practiced and uncontested at that time. There was no serious debate over whether infants should be baptized; it was universally accepted. The only issue under discussion was whether baptism should follow the eighth-day timing prescribed for Old Testament circumcision. Following that council, a considerable body of evidence shows that infants were regularly baptized, so much so that even those who opposed the practice did not deny that it was common after 250 A.D.¹⁴

Section IV. Objections to Infant Baptism in the Bible

Opponents of infant baptism often appeal to New Testament passages such as Romans 6:3–4, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:27–28, and Colossians 2:11–12. Their argument is that baptism in Scripture is consistently tied to personal faith in Christ, and therefore only those who consciously believe should receive it.¹⁵

¹⁴ Wayne Vogt. *The Biblical Substantiation for infant Baptism*. Pastoral-Delegate Conference, Texas-New Mexico. pp6-.7

¹⁵ Scott J. Simmons. *A Case for Infant Baptism: SJS Essays*. 2002-2003 A Place for Truth p.6

From this perspective, baptism according to them serves as **a visible sign of a believer's personal trust in Christ and commitment to follow Him.** It symbolizes what has already taken place inwardly—repentance, faith, and new life through the Spirit. Without genuine faith, baptism loses its meaning and becomes an empty ritual. For this reason, baptism should only be administered to those who have consciously embraced the gospel and can publicly confess Christ as Lord.

In line with this reasoning, these critics also emphasize that these passages portray baptism **as a symbol of purification from sins**, a cleansing that can only be received through faith in Jesus Christ. Since infants are not capable of exercising personal faith or repentance, they cannot yet experience the reality that baptism is meant to signify. To baptize those who do not believe reduces the ordinance to a mere ritual without the saving reality it represents. Therefore, baptism should be reserved for those who personally believe in Christ, because only they can experience the forgiveness and cleansing that the sacrament points to.¹⁶

Furthermore more, opponents of infant baptism raise several objections based on passages commonly cited in its support. Their argument is that these texts, when read carefully, point to baptism following personal faith rather than its extension to infants. The following is a summary of Objections to Infant Baptism in Key Passages.

Acts 2:38–39

Paedobaptists interpret Peter's words, "the promise is for you and your children," as including infants. Critics, however, respond that the promise is not restricted to children of believers but extends to "all who are far off," that is, everyone "whom the Lord our God will call." If this call refers to the outward preaching of the gospel, it applies to all hearers; if it refers to the inward call of God, it applies only to the elect. Furthermore, Acts 2:41 clarifies that "those who received his word were baptized," implying conscious acceptance of the message. Thus, baptism here is reserved for believers, not infants.¹⁷

Colossians 2:11–12

¹⁶ Scott J. Simmons. *A Case for Infant Baptism: SJS Essays*. 2002-2003 A Place for Truth pp7-8

¹⁷ Greg Welty. *A Critical Evaluation Of Infant Baptism* pp16-17

Advocates of infant baptism often claim that baptism in the New Testament replaces circumcision in the Old Testament and should therefore be administered to infants. Critics, while acknowledging a parallel between the two rites, argue that Paul's focus is different. He explicitly links baptism with spiritual renewal: the putting off of the sinful nature and being raised with Christ *through faith*. Since infants cannot exercise such faith, this passage is seen as affirming believer's baptism rather than infant baptism.

Household Baptisms in Acts

Several accounts of household baptisms are cited in defense of infant baptism. Yet opponents argue that in every case, baptism follows personal faith. For instance, in Acts 16:32–34, the Philippian jailer's entire household first heard the gospel, and then believed, rejoiced, and were baptized together. Critics conclude that the household baptisms demonstrate a consistent pattern of baptism based on belief, not indiscriminate application to infants.

1 Corinthians 7:14

Paedobaptists sometimes argue that children of at least one believing parent are “holy” in a covenantal sense and therefore eligible for baptism. Critics respond that Paul uses the same term “holy” for the unbelieving spouse, showing that holiness here is relational, not covenantal. The child's holiness arises from association with a believing parent, not from a covenant status that warrants baptism. Applying the verse only to children while excluding the unbelieving spouse is, in their view, a misinterpretation.¹⁸

In summary, critics contend that the passages often cited to support infant baptism instead emphasize baptism as a response to personal faith. They argue that applying these texts to infants misrepresents their meaning and does not align with the New Testament pattern of baptism for believers.

¹⁸ Greg WeltyA Critical Evaluation of Infant Baptist. pp18-19

Section V. Objections to infant Baptism in history and contemporary.

Objections in History:

The practice of baptizing infants was the normal tradition of the Church and was not seriously questioned until the time of the Reformation. Earlier, in the fourth century, some Church leaders such as Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, and Augustine postponed baptism until later in life. For them baptism was viewed less as a sacrament of incorporation into the Church and more as a sacrament of pardon.¹⁹ From the tenth to the thirteenth century, the Neo-Manicheans objected to infant baptism on the grounds that infants could not yet believe. They appealed to a literal reading of Mark 16:16: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved; he who does not believe will be condemned.” Since infants cannot believe, they argued, they could not receive baptism validly.²⁰

At the time of the Reformation these concerns reemerged with new force. In 1523 Andreas Bodenstein von Karlstadt began advocating that baptism should be delayed until a child could understand its meaning. Soon afterward, in places such as Wytikon and Zollikon, parents refused to have their infants baptized, preferring instead to wait until their children reached maturity and could choose sponsors for themselves. This rejection of infant baptism, and the demand that baptism be given only to believers, gave rise to the nickname “Anabaptists” or “rebaptizers,” a movement that became a defining mark of the Radical Reformation.²¹

From that point on, infant baptism became one of the most objectionable practices in the Western Church. To the Anabaptists it was even a scandal, while in later centuries some Baptists, in reexamining their own tradition, began to question their rejection of infant baptism and their practice of rebaptizing converts

Contemporary Objections:

Although theology guarantees the *ex opere operato* validity of infant baptism, its practice continues to raise concern today. The renewal of both theology and pastoral life, together

¹⁹ Kenneth Oppong, Tony Ogouma, Peter Obeng Man. *An Evaluation of Infant Baptism*. Department of Religious Education, Valley View University, Ghana, Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya. pp5-6

²⁰ Argentina Richard X. Redmond, S.S. *Infant Baptism: History and Pastoral Problems* P.3

²¹ David. F. Tenant. *Anabaptist Theologies of Childhood and Education: The Repudiation Of Infant Baptism* p2

with recent Protestant objections, have pushed this issue into focus. What is at stake is not only a right understanding of baptism but also the very missionary nature and mission of the Church. And while this debate is most evident in countries where Christian influence is fading, the Church in Uganda, too, cannot afford to ignore it.²² Some of the current objections to the practice of infant baptism are as discussed below:

To begin with, some people argue that baptizing infants limits their personal freedom. They claim it undermines the dignity of the child to place upon them religious obligations they might one day choose to reject. From this perspective, baptism should be delayed until a person is old enough to make a free and conscious commitment. Until then, parents and teachers should avoid influencing the decision.²³

In addition, critics point to the pastoral origins of the practice, claiming that it reflects more concern with administering sacraments than with stirring faith or promoting evangelization. Critics maintain that by retaining infant baptism, the Church prioritizes numbers and social establishment over true missionary outreach. This, they argue, fosters a “magical” understanding of the sacraments, whereas what is really needed is an approach that nurtures conscious faith, supports genuine personal commitment, and positions baptism within a gradual process of spiritual growth.²⁴

Another concern, raised by Alister E. Mc Grath (529) in his book, *'Christian Theology'* brings out Karl Barth's argument on the significance of infant baptism that the practice weakens the central link between baptism and Christian discipleship. He emphasizes that baptism is a witness to the grace of God, and makes the beginning of the human response to the grace and that infants cannot meaningfully make this response.²⁵

Further objection, presented by Richard Kenneth Atkins (8) in his article, *'Peirce's Modal Defense of Infant Baptism'*, raises the obvious Baptist's view that a baptized infant does not

²² Argentina Richard X. Redmond, S.S. *Infant Baptism: History and Pastoral Problems*. p4

²³ Franjo Cardinal Sepe. Jerome Hamer.O.P. *Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 20, 1980.*

²⁴ Franjo Cardinal Seper, Jerome Hamer, O.P.*Rome, At the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 20, 1980.*

²⁵ Alister E. Mc Grath.*ChristianTheology.Introduction*.5thEdition.p.529.

become regenerate or reborn “until he actually has those Feelings” that bring about regeneration or rebirth no matter how much water the child’s head is sprinkled with.

Finally, Balthasar Hubmaier in the book by Wayne Pipkin, *The Baptismal Theology* urges that Baptism of infants is not real baptism, even if the Trinitarian name of God is used, for "baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit takes place when a person first confesses that he is a sinner and guilty, when he then believes in the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and therefore resolves from now on to live according to the Rule of Christ as far as God the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit will give him grace and strength".²⁶

In conclusion, though the objections differ, whether theological, pastoral, sacramental, or related to discipleship and personal faith, they all share the same concern: that baptizing infants weakens the link between baptism and personal belie

Section VI. In support of infant Baptistism

Despite widespread criticism, infant baptism rests on strong foundations and is supported by several convincing reasons. The arguments discussed below approach the practice from biblical, historical, pastoral, and theological perspectives, including arguments from silence, in response to the objections raised above.

The critics’ view of baptism that looks at it as a visible sign of a believer’s personal trust in Christ and commitment to follow Him, as seen in the New Testament, ends up being focused mainly on people rather than on God. It makes baptism mean only a response to an inward change, instead of a sign of God’s grace. But covenant signs, like baptism, are signs of God’s covenant of grace. They are about His gracious promise, not about our personal commitment. Just as circumcision was a sign of God’s covenant promises, baptism is also a sign of God’s faithfulness in Christ. Through baptism, God promises salvation to the believer. However, if a child grows up and never responds in faith, that same covenant brings judgment instead of blessing.

Covenant signs are not just individual but also communal—they mark a person as belonging to the covenant family, the people of God. Baptism is less about someone declaring their personal decision and more about being set apart to God within the believing community.

²⁶ Wayne Pipkin .The Baptismal Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier H. pp41-42

This is why infant baptism serves as an important correction to the strong individualism that has shaped many churches today

The argument that baptism symbolizes purification from sins, as seen in Tit. 3:5 and 1 Cor. 6:11 is agreeable to me. But this does not mean that only those who already believe should be baptized. The sign of baptism should not be confused with the actual reality it points to. Children of believers are baptized with the hope that, in time, they will come to faith and receive the true purification from sin. If we reject this, we would also have to reject circumcision in the Old Testament. Circumcision also symbolized the removal of sin and being set apart to serve God, yet it was given to infants. For that reason, it makes sense that infants can be baptized too.²⁷

While the critics argue that Acts 2:39 does not give a covenant promise to children, the text itself shows otherwise. Peter explicitly says, “*The promise is for you and for your children.*” This deliberate inclusion demonstrates continuity with God’s covenant dealings in the Old Testament, where children were always included within the covenant community and received the covenant sign. Far from abolishing this principle at Pentecost, Peter reaffirms it, showing that children remain within the covenant community. The call to repentance and faith applies to all, but the covenant sign (baptism) is still placed on believers and their children, just as circumcision had been. Thus, Acts 2:39 supports, rather than excludes the baptism of covenant children.

The objection raised against infant baptism in Colossians 2:11–12 focuses only on personal faith and inward transformation, thereby excluding infants from baptism. However, Paul’s point is not to separate circumcision from baptism but to show that both point to the same reality—Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection. Circumcision looked forward to what Christ would accomplish, while baptism looks back to what He has accomplished. Since circumcision was given to infants as a sign of belonging to God’s people, and Paul directly connects it with baptism, it follows that baptism should also be given to infants.²⁸

²⁷ Scott J. Simmons .*A Case for Infant Baptism Rev. SJS Essays 2002-2003 A Place for Truth pp7-8*

²⁸ Jason Helopoulos .*The Controversy about Infant Baptism*. January 4, 2018.

One important line of evidence in support of infant baptism comes from the biblical accounts of entire households being baptized together.

The New Testament records several instances where baptism was administered to whole households. For example: Lydia: “She was baptized, and her household” (Acts 16:15), The Philippian Jailer: “He and his entire household were baptized” (Acts 16:33) and the Household of Stephanas: Paul writes, “I did baptize also the household of Stephanas” (1 Corinthians 1:16).

In each case, the text emphasizes the inclusion of the *entire household* rather than specifying only adult believers.

While the biblical texts do not specify the ages of the household members, it is improbable that these households were composed only of adults. In the cultural context of the first century, households typically included not only parents but also children, extended family, and servants with their children. Thus, the natural reading of “household” would reasonably include infants and young children.

Admittedly, these passages do not directly prove that infants were baptized. But they do make the practice very possible. Since whole households were baptized without any limits mentioned, it makes sense to believe that children, even infants, were included. When this is combined with other biblical and theological reasons, household baptisms give strong support for infant baptism.²⁹

In 1 Corinthians 7:14, Paul makes a clear distinction between the unbelieving spouse and the child of a believer. The unbelieving spouse is said to be “sanctified” *through* the believer, but he describes the children of one believing parent as “holy.” This difference in wording and emphasis indicates that Paul is not equating the two in the same way. The child is declared holy based upon the parent’s faith and trust in the Lord. Paul is not speaking here of subjective inward holiness, but to objective holiness. That is, he is speaking of holiness regarding connection and privilege. The children are holy because they are being raised in a home under the guidance of holiness and the teachings of Christ. This means that such a child is set apart and included in the community of God’s people and as a result, they are not to be

²⁹ Wayne Vogt. The Biblical Substantiation for Infant Baptism. January 1973 Texas-New Mexico Pastoral-Delegate Conference. p5

regarded as “unclean” (as those outside the covenant). And that is exactly why the church has historically recognized them as rightful recipients of the covenant sign of baptism.³⁰

In response to the historical objections, infant baptism has been widely practiced and justified within the Church from its earliest centuries. Even before Augustine, baptism was understood as the forgiveness of sins, which initially raised questions regarding infants, who had committed no personal sin. Early Church leaders, however, defended the practice. **Chrysostom**, for instance, explained that infants are baptized so that they may receive justice, adoption, inheritance, and grace—becoming members of Christ and temples of the Holy Spirit. Baptism was therefore seen as the means by which children were incorporated into the covenant community from the very beginning of life.

Over time, theologians sought to explain how baptism could be applied to those unable to express personal faith. Augustine and later scholars argued that the faith of the Church compensates for the infant’s lack of personal faith, a view that was further developed by Peter Lombard through the distinction of **munus and usus**—habit and act of faith. Historical figures such as Aquinas and Bonaventure synthesized these ideas, showing that the Church’s faith prepared the infant for baptism, and the sacrament itself communicated this faith to the child.

The historical acceptance of infant baptism was confirmed and reinforced through councils and official Church declarations. The Council of Vienne in 1312 recognized the doctrine as probable, while the Council of Trent formally affirmed that baptism confers all theological virtues, including faith. Subsequent statements, including those at Florence, the 20th-century *Monitum*, and Pope Paul VI’s *Credo*, demonstrate the Church’s consistent defense of infant baptism across the centuries.

Even during the Reformation, when groups such as the Anabaptists rejected infant baptism, the practice was widely upheld by both Catholics and most Protestant traditions, showing its broad historical continuity. This enduring practice reflects the Church’s longstanding view

³⁰ Jason Helopoulos . *The Controversy about Infant Baptism*. January 4, 2018.

that infants belong fully within the covenant community and that baptism has been an essential means of initiating them into the life of the Church throughout history.

The idea that baptism restricts a child's freedom is a misconception: No one is completely free from influence. Even naturally, parents make decisions that are crucial for their child's life and moral formation. Even choosing not to guide a child's religious life is itself a choice, one that may withhold something important.

Baptism does not take away freedom. Every person has responsibilities to God, and baptism recognizes these while welcoming the child as God's own. The New Testament presents joining the Christian life not as forced, but as the way to true freedom.

A child might later resist the duties of baptism. This can be painful for parents, but it does not mean they were wrong to baptize and raise the child in faith. Even if faith seems dormant, the seeds planted can grow later, nourished by the parents' love, prayers, and faithful example.³¹ The objection that infant baptism undermines evangelistic passion and reduces baptism to mere ritual misses the richer meaning of the practice. While the Church indeed seeks to awaken faith and encourage mature discipleship, the sacrament's necessity applies equally to children, who are baptized not by personal profession but within the faith of the Church. Far from being a concession to numbers or social establishment, infant baptism reflects the Church's duty to extend Christ's saving grace universally, incorporating even children into His body. It is, in fact, deeply missionary, showing that salvation begins with God's free initiative: "He first loved us" (1 Jn 4:19), and "He saved us... through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit" (Tit 3:5). Far from diminishing missionary zeal, baptizing infants proclaims God's mercy from the very start of life and commits the Church to fostering that gift toward mature faith.³²

Barth's objection to the practice of infant baptism could limit how much God's grace can reach. This is because infant baptism shows that God's grace is there even before a person cannot understand it. This means that God's grace comes first, even before someone can decide to follow Him. If we only focus on baptizing people who can understand and respond

³¹ Franjo Cardinal Sepe. Jerome Hamer.O.P. *Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 20, 1980.*

³² Franjo Cardinal Sepe. Jerome Hamer.O.P. *Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 20,*

to God, this might make us underestimate God's grace which is available for all including infant despite of their inability to respond to it.

The view by Kenneth is contradictory to the orthodox view which is being held by many that "an infant is Regenerate when his sponsors at the font have promised that his mind shall receive that Christian nurture which will insure his ultimately having the Feelings, at least, and valuations of Feeling, that are about all that is common to all Christians" Therefore, an infant may be baptized to signify her regeneration, provided the family and community sincerely vow and endeavor to raise that infant according to Christian ideals, as they promise to do at the baptismal ceremony.³³

While Hubmaier's argument is true that infants cannot make a confession of their sin or belief in forgiveness in the same way adults can, it should be understood that the sacrament of baptism is not solely dependent on the recipient's understanding or confession. For instance the baptism of the entire household, including children in Acts 16:33. Hubmaier also seems not to have understood baptism as an act of God's grace, initiation into the Christian community, and incorporation into the body of Christ rather other than just as an individual's expression of faith.

Furthermore, this argument doesn't consider other ways people understand baptism in Christianity. Some Christians recognize the validity of infant baptism based on theological traditions and scriptural interpretations different from Hubmaier's idea. Therefore, dismissing infant baptism as "not real baptism," makes this argument too simple and ignores the many different beliefs and practices in Christianity

Peter Nyende, in his article "*Prepared to Believe: The Evangelism of Pre-schoolers and Infant Baptism in African Anglican Churches*", observes and gives a summary of the significance of infant baptism. He says Infant baptism carries significant implications for the subsequent evangelism and Christian formation of the baptized child. The practice symbolizes forgiveness of sins, rebirth, and membership in God's family, marking the beginning of the child's Christian journey.³⁴ I totally agree by Nyende's summary of the

³³ Richard Kenneth Atkins. *Peirce's Modal Defense of Infant Baptism*. Transactions Volume 54 Number 4. p.8

³⁴ Peter Nyende. *Prepared to Believe: The Evangelism of Pre-schoolers and Infant Baptism in African Anglican Churches*. The Global Anglican 134/4 (2020):299–316

significance of infant baptism because the practice is deeply rooted in Christian tradition and theology, symbolizing the forgiveness of sins, rebirth, and the initiation of the child into the Christian community. This act signifies the child's inclusion in God's family and marks the beginning of their spiritual journey. And through baptism, the child is welcomed into the Church and becomes a part of the broader Christian community, receiving the grace and blessings of God from infancy.

Let's also consider arguments from silence in response to the criticism of this practice. But first, let's begin by asking: why not baptize infants? To those who oppose it, we pose a question: "Do you aim to adhere strictly to biblical principles? Then where does Scripture expressly prohibit infant baptism? Can you point to a specific verse?" The truth is, no such verse exists—there's no scriptural prohibition against infant baptism, nor any verse that contradicts its practice.

This inquiry can be extended: Where in the Bible can we locate a verse wherein the children of believers are not granted the sign of the covenant? In what instances do children of believers need to reach adulthood, or at least their teenage years, before being baptized? Where are they instructed to wait for this? And where do we find biblical guidance on preparing the children of believers for baptism in their later years?

While it's an argument from silence, it's still an argument. It's worth acknowledging the absence of a clear scriptural command regarding infant baptism. The instances of it in the New Testament, particularly the two household baptisms in Philippi (Acts 16), have sparked debates. Interestingly, Paul instructs the Philippian church to maintain the practices he taught them (Phil 4:9). David Peterson, former Principal of Oak Hill Theological College in London, suggests that it's highly unlikely that there were no babies included in any of the four household baptisms described by Luke.

In the New Testament, there are various instances where specific commands are not clearly given for certain actions. For instance, while polygamy is considered wrong, neither Paul nor Peter directly addressed it. They assumed that Christians understood its wrongness based on the teachings of the Old Testament, just as they assumed Christians recognized the wrongness of a Christian man marrying his sister or aunt. Similarly, the New Testament doesn't expressly mandate that women partake in the Lord's Supper, yet we don't withhold the bread and wine from them. Likewise, the absence of a direct command regarding the baptism of infants

does not necessarily prevent its acceptance and approval by God if it can be justified on other grounds.

Both sides of the debate lack straightforward proof texts. Arguments from silence exist on both sides, yet the argument isn't based on a specific verse's explicit command. It is clear that the debate isn't just about interpreting a few specific verses; it's about understanding the overall structure and message of the Bible. So, it's important to approach the debate with kindness towards those who disagree and the humility to patiently discuss and consider different viewpoints.³⁵

Section VII. Conclusion

The topic of infant baptism is actually without any doubt an objectionable one. Believers from various Christian denominations are unable to view it similarly. Much as they read the same Bible, and profess their faith to be guided by the same Spirit, they arrive at different conclusions about this type of baptism. make different conclusion in regard to this form of baptism.

A greater number of Christians believe that the practice of infant baptism is Scripturally supported while only a small one comprising of mainly those from Pentecostal Churches look at infant baptism as a practice with no scriptural basis and wrong to perform it.

Such views should not bring confusion and division among the Christians of the province of the Church of Uganda but rather they should hold on to the doctrine of the Church in regard to the practice.

The worldwide Anglican Church, where the province of the Church of Uganda falls under much as it is autonomous plainly declares in the 27th Article of religion that 'the baptism of young children is in any wise to be retained, as most agreeable with the institution of Christ.' This is supported by the numerous Biblical Scholars and other writers whose theological views are in support of the practice.

And while it may be difficult for infants to understand that baptism brings about a spiritual rebirth to people, making them become God's children who have entered into a life that is divine thus making the baptized become members of Christ's body (The Church), they are basic to the Christian faith. The province of the Church of Uganda and the Anglican Church globally and other various Christian denominations, including the Catholic Church, Orthodox

³⁵ Lee Gatiss. The Anglican Doctrine of Infant Baptism. pp.4-5

Church, Lutheran Church, Presbyterian Church, Methodist Church, Some Nazarene Churches, Moravian Church, and other Reformed denominations, believe there's no need to delay such important rites until adulthood.

The practice indeed should not be denied to infants or delayed to be administered until adulthood because of the significant role it plays in the lives of infants.

Some of the ways through which the practice is significant and are the very reasons as to why it should be uphold in the province of the Church of Uganda are as follows:

First, it is an acknowledgement of Church membership. Through this ritual, the infant is acknowledged as a member of the church, which constitutes the assembly of the Lord and God's family. The believers' children are church members by birth and the sacrament of baptism acknowledges that membership in a public manner. Similarly, the kids that are born into the barn belong to the goat's herder of the flock and are identified with the goat herder's mark. If the she-goat belongs to the goat herder, the kids belong to him too and he marks them as his own. The kids that are born into the barn of the Good goat's herder belong to Him and are identified with His mark in baptism. If the goats are His, the Kids are His also and He marks them as His own in the sacrament of baptism.

Children born to believers, who are acknowledged through baptism as church members, are registered as "non-communing members." They do not have access to all the benefits of full membership, as they are not allowed to participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or to vote in congregational meetings. However, upon coming of age and after they have made their own decision to confirm their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ through a credible profession, they are registered as full Church members, with all the rights and privileges associated with it, including participation in Communion. Since they were baptized as infants, there is no need for them to be re-baptized.

Secondly, baptism of infants is a token of the Covenant. When parents bring their children for baptism, they claim the benefits of their children to the Covenant of Grace and the blessings promised to be given by the Lord. This extends not only to believers but also to their children, as children of believing parents have always been included in God's covenantal blessings (Genesis 9:9; 17:7; Exodus 20:5; Deuteronomy 29:10-13). For instance, in Joel 2:28, the prophet proclaims, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Children born to believing parents are included in the Covenant, and their parents have the right to claim its benefits for them through the sacrament of baptism. Therefore,

when parents present their children for baptism, they claim for those children the rich legacy willed by God to them in Jesus Christ. The richest benefits which parents claim for their children in this sacrament are the Holy Spirit and everlasting Life. Thus, from the moment of baptism, children begin receiving the Covenant's benefits and the blessings given by God through Christ.³⁶

Lastly, infant baptism signifies the washing away of original sin and regeneration. In the case of new-born infants, the old life which they come with is to be left behind, the defilement of which is to be washed away, and from which regeneration is to be sought. The remedy was found in the doctrine of original sin. All people born into the world are born in a fallen state, interpreted in various ways: as a corruption of human nature or as the loss of the supernatural life originally given to Adam. Baptism, then, acts as a remedy for this fallen state caused by original sin. It purifies the infant's soul, thereby restoring the supernatural gifts of heavenly life through the atonement of Christ, which Adam had not enjoyed before the fall.³⁷

Given the above arguments, the practice of infant baptism continues to be significant in the province of the Church of Uganda and should therefore be uphold since it still remains a tradition that is deeply rooted within the Church and many other Christian denominations mentioned earlier. And as a tradition that serves as a visible sign of God's grace and the initiation of children into the covenant community of faith, the adherents of the Church and those from other Christian denominations that practice it should continue embracing it; taking into consideration that the practice has a Biblical basis and it also remains a valid sacramental rite whenever it is administered in the Triune Name. And so, regardless of the position of those who object its practice, it is clearly evident that infant baptism holds profound theological significance and continues to shape the beliefs and practices of many Christians not only in Uganda but also in other parts of the world.

³⁶ Ben. L. Rose. Feb. 1, 1950. *The Baptism of Infants. Its Meaning and Its Authority*. The Southern Presbyterian Journal
Pastor Central Presbyterian Church Bristol • Tennessee. p.8

³⁷ Oliver Chase Quick. *The Christian Sacraments*. 1944. Nisbet & Co. LTD 22 Berners Street, W.I. Pg.171

Bibliography:

Greg Welty. Greg Welty. A Critical Evaluation of Infant Baptism.

Kenneth Oppong, Tony Ogouma, Peter Obeng Man. *An Evaluation of Infant Baptism. Department of Religious Education, Valley View University, Ghana, Theological Seminary, Adventist University of Africa, Kenya.*

Argentina Richard X. Redmond, S.S. *Infant Baptism: History and Pastoral Problems*

David. F. Tenant. *Anabaptist Theologies of Childhood and Education: The Repudiation of Infant Baptism*

Scott McKee. *The baptism of children. Ward Church A Guide for Parents.*

Franjo Cardinal Sepe. Jerome Hamer.O.P. *Rome, at the Sacred Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, October 20, 1980.*

Alister E. Mc Grath.*ChristianTheology.Introduction.5thEdition.*

Wayne Pipkin .The Baptismal Theology of Balthasar Hubmaier H.

Wayne Vogt.The Biblical Substantiation for Infant Baptism. January 1973 Texas-New Mexico Pastoral-Delegate Conference.

Jason Helopoulos .*The Controversy about Infant Baptism.* January 4, 2018

Richard Kenneth Atkins. *Peirce's Modal Defense of Infant Baptism.* Transactions Volume 54 Number 4.

Peter Nyende. *Prepared to Believe: The Evangelism of Pre-schoolers and Infant Baptism in African Anglican Churches.* The Global Anglican 134/4 (2020):299–316

Lee Gatiss. The Anglican Doctrine of Infant Baptism.

Ben. L. Rose. Feb. 1, 1950.*The Baptism of Infants. Its Meaning and Its Authority.* The Southern Presbyterian Journal Pastor Central Presbyterian Church Bristol• Tennessee.

Oliver Chase Quick. *The Christian Sacraments.* 1944. Nisbet & Co. LTD 22 Berners Street, W.I.