

Tertullian’s Understanding of Baptism*

Tertullian’ın Vaftiz Anlayışı

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Makale Bilgisi / Article Information

Makale Türü / Article Types: Çeviri Makale / Translated Article

Geliş Tarihi / Received: 25 Şubat / February 2020

Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 6 Nisan / April 2020

Yayın Tarihi / Published: 30 Haziran / June 2020

Yayın Sezonu / Pub. Date Season: Haziran / June

Sayı / Issue: 14 **Sayfa / Pages:** 375-402

Atıf / Cite as: Yılmaz, Nuh. “Tertullian’s Understanding of Baptism [Tertullian’ın Vaftiz Anlayışı]”. *Amasya İlahiyat Dergisi-Amasya Theology Journal* 14 (June 2020): 375-402.

<https://doi.org/10.18498/amailad.693914>.

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* This article was published previously in Turkish in the name of “Tertullian’ın Vaftiz Anlayışı”, in the Journal of Sakarya University Faculty of Theology, vol. 17, Num. 31 (June 2015), 121-140.

Tertullian's Understanding of Baptism

Abstract

Baptism, which is known as entrance into the religion of Christianity, gained different extent with Jesus Christ by necessitating an acceptance and understanding of the trinity. Tertullian was the subject of our study in terms of both the fact that the work that he wrote about baptism has survived among the early church fathers and that he exhibited an attitude about the delay of baptism. He, in struggling with Quintilla, argued that not only was faith sufficient for human salvation, but also that baptism was essential. Tertullian, who made explanations about when and by whom the baptism sacrament should be performed, mentioned martyrdom as a second type of baptism. He also suggested that people of all ages, especially infants/ children, should delay the practice of baptism without a legitimate excuse. This article discusses Tertullian's general understanding of baptism, the basis of this perception and in particular his attitude towards infant baptism, after having outlined the historical course of baptism perception and water phenomena in the pre-Tertullian period. In the conclusion part, a brief summary of the findings is presented and some assessments have been done.

Summary

Tertullian, who was the founder of Latin Christianity and also known as the father of the Latin Church, probably lived between (150-220? AD). Born in a pagan family, Tertullian converted to Christianity between 180-195. He possibly accepted Montanism in 200? and died at a very late age (220?). In his struggling with the Quintilla, who argues that faith is sufficient for salvation, he created his work of "*On Baptism*" in order to assert that faith alone is not enough but also baptism is essential. This work is important as it is the first study on early Christian baptism.

Baptism has a long history. However, with the baptism of John the Baptist, the understanding of baptism gained a theological dimension and necessitated to the confession of the belief of the trinity. The practice of baptism, which substantially occupies the mind of Tertullian, at the same time has also made him one of the pioneers about this field. For instance, Tertullian is the first church father to express an opinion against child baptism. He is the first church father to use the phrase of "baptism" and "eucharist". Again, he is the first church father to express his opinion about the godmother and godfather practice. Tertullian is the first church father to say that the Pentecost and Easter period are particularly suitable for baptism. But he is also cautious that baptism

can be practiced in all the time. Last but not least, Tertullian is the first church father to say that women had no authority to baptize.

According to him, in the matter of human salvation, the faith is alone not enough but baptism is a must. Indeed, Tertullian explains the purpose and importance of the baptism in the way that the person is purified from all sins by being baptized and reaches the capacity to achieve eternal life. In this sense, he declared a valid formula the statement from the Gospel of Matthew (Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.) that was shown evidence about baptism. Again, he stated that baptism is not only limited to Easter and Pentecost feasts, but also it can be practiced at any time. He also indicated that baptism can be performed by everyone except women and those who are considered as heretic by the church. In addition to water baptism, he stated that martyrdom is also a kind of baptism, it performs the same function as water baptism and even superior to it.

Tertullian generally advocates that baptism should be postponed. In his view, both the innocence of children and their inability to use their minds and the fear of unforgiveness of the sins committed after being baptized played an important role. There are different approaches among researchers about delaying baptism and inconsistency in Tertullian's views. For example, according to Miller, Tertullian, on the one hand, advocates that children postpone their baptism later, on the other hand, he states that singles and widows must also postpone their baptism. Again, according to Miller, Tertullian, on the one hand, says that healthy people should delay their baptism, on the other hand, he considers it necessary in situations such as illness and death. Besides, according to Kaye, Tertullian contradicts himself about whether deadly sins will be forgiven or not. Because, Tertullian initially exhibited a more moderate perspective, and argued that God would forgive him even if the person committed a deadly sin; however, after adopting Montanism, he put forward a more rigid point of view and stated that these sins committed after baptism would exclude the person out of eternal salvation. In my opinion, both of the reasons mentioned above have been effective in delaying baptism. Because if Tertullian only brought innocence and mind to the fore, then it would not be concluded that it would be good for singles and widows to postpone their baptism. The change in his ideas is the fear that great sins committed after baptism cannot be forgiven. Therefore, according to him, the most valid of baptism is the one that is left to the end.

This article, after having outlined the historical course of baptism perception and water phenomena in the pre-Tertullian period, discusses Tertullian's general understanding of baptism, the basis of this perception, and in particular his attitude towards infant baptism. The article is important in terms of providing a perspective on the concept of baptism practiced in the early period of Christianity, especially on infant/child baptism. The aim of this article is to present Tertullian's views on baptism in a tidy and detailed manner.

Keywords: History of Religion, Tertullian, Baptism, Quintilla, Infant Baptism.

Tertullian'ın Vaftiz Anlayışı

Öz

Hıristiyanlıkta dine giriş ayini olarak bilinen vaftiz, İsa Mesih'le birlikte teslis anlayışını kabullenmeyi de gerekli kılarak farklı bir boyut kazanmıştır. Tertullian, erken dönem kilise babaları arasında hem vaftize dair yazmış olduğu eserin günümüze ulaşmış olması hem de vaftizin geciktirilmesi noktasında bir tutum sergilemesi açısından çalışmamızın konusu oldu. O, Quintilla ile olan mücadelesinde insanın kurtuluşu için sadece inancın yeterli olmadığını, bunun yanı sıra vaftiz olmasının da elzem olduğunu savunmuştur. Vaftiz sakramentinin ne zaman ve kimler tarafından icra edilmesi gerektiği hususunda açıklamalarda bulunan Tertullian, şehitliği ikinci bir vaftiz türü olarak zikretmiştir. Ayrıca başta bebek/çocuklar olmak üzere her yaşta insanın meşru bir mazereti olmaksızın vaftiz uygulamasını geciktirmesi yönünde görüşler ileri sürmüştür. Bu makale, Tertullian öncesi dönemde vaftiz algısı ve su fenomeninin tarihi seyrine genel hatlarıyla değindikten sonra, Tertullian'ın genel anlamda vaftiz anlayışını, bu algının dayanağını ve özel olarak da çocuk vaftizine karşı tutumunu ele almaktadır. Sonuç kısmında elde edilen bulgulara dair kısa bir özet sunulmakta ve değerlendirmelerde bulunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Dinler Tarihi, Tertullian, Vaftiz, Quintilla, Çocuk Vaftizi.

Introduction

The word of baptism which was used in English in the form of baptism, comes from the Greek word "baptein" and "baptezain" which means to plunge, to immerse or to wash.¹ Tertullian² always uses the

¹ Michel Meslin, "Baptism", *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (United States of America: Thomson Gale, 2005), 2/779.

Latin word “tingo” instead of “baptein” and “baptizein”.³ “Tingo” means dye, colour, stain, sprinkle, wash and imbrue. He sometimes uses “mergo” which means to merge or to dip instead of baptism; but never “submergo” the equivalent of immerse.⁴ Because Tertullian contemplates that Christ poured water on his disciples except Peter and this was a kind of baptism.⁵ Also Tertullian uses Latin word “lavacrum”⁶ instead of baptism. He signifies with this word to the whole body's washing and purifying in Christ.⁷

As to the term meaning of baptism, it means that the sins of someone were forgiven by one of the church authorities into the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;⁸ also immersion in water as a symbol of resurrection in a new life.⁹ Besides, the baptism is accepted as the sacrament of entrance into the Christianity; it both washes away past

² Tertullian was born in Carthage about the middle of the second century. Although the common opinion is that he was born about 160 A. D., but some pushes the date back toward the beginning of the fifties and the forties. Tertullian was born of a pagan parent; his father was a Roman centurion. Tertullian who received education in rhetoric and jurisprudence, was converted to Christianity probably between 180 and 190 A.D. According to Jerome, Tertullian became a presbyter and continued as such until middle life (probably in Carthage). Tertullian who spent the later years of his life as a Montanist, went over to Montanism (probably about 200 A. D.) and died at an advanced age (220?). See. Eusebius Pamphilius, *Church History, Life of Constantine, Oration in Praise of Constantine*, NPNF2-01, ed. Philip Schaff (New York: Christian Literature Publishing Co, 1890), 149, fn. 272.

³ James Bennett, *The Theology of the Early Christian Church* (London: Jackson and Walford, 1855), 197.

⁴ John Wood, *A Manual on Christian Baptism: Its Mode and Subjects* (Toronto: Maclear, Thomas & Co, Printers, 1857), 56.

⁵ Bennett, *The Theology of the Early Christian Church*, 200.

⁶ About the use of this word see. Tertullian, “On Baptism”, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), 3/672, fn. 16; 673, fn. 10; 674, fn. 19; 676, fn. 18; 677, fn. 1, 7; 679, fn. 6, 7. (Note: Tertullian's works are included in volumes 3 and 4 of the Ante-Nicene Fathers corpus. Also referring to Ante-Nicene Fathers, it will be abbreviated as ANF.)

⁷ Tertullian, “On Prayer”, 3/685.

⁸ Matthew, 28/19.

⁹ William Cecil Duncan, *History of the Early Baptists: From the Beginning of Gospel to the Rise of Affusion As Baptism and of Infant Baptism, 28 A.D–250 A. D.* (New York: L. Alex Duncan & Co, 1857), XVIII.

sins and ensures the reception of the divine Spirit.¹⁰ According to Tertullian, the baptism means forgiveness of sins of people, deliverance from death,¹¹ regeneration and participation in the Holy Spirit.¹²

The water phenomenon, the main element of baptism, has a history that goes back to the creation of the universe, symbolizes all potentiality and constitutes the main source of all things. The water in the tradition of India, besides just the main source of the whole World, have a feature healing, treats and heals all the diseases. In other respects, the water was the basis of all cosmic manifestation that was formless and potential. Everything that contacting with the water, refers to the rebirth. The water in Sumerians indicates generation associating with sperm; In Mesopotamian carvings, symbolizes fertility with the symbolic fish.¹³ Again, in the ancient Near East, Babylon and Egypt, it is believed that the water has a property of purification; it is accepted that the cold water of the Nile River has a regeneratory feature, it is believed that the water immortalizes the dead and it is used to baptize the dead. It is possible to see the water's property of granting immortality in the Greek World. For instance, washing was seen as a preliminary to initiation into the cult of Demeter at Eleusis.¹⁴ It is possible to mention the water's liturgical using in Judaism. Because the daily washing exercise was practiced by both Essenes and other Jewish sects.¹⁵ Indeed

¹⁰ Paul Tillich, *A History of Christian Thought from Its Judaic and Hellenistic Origins to Existentialism*, ed. Carl E. Braaten (New York: A Touchstone Book Simon & Schuster, Inc, 1967), 18, 48.

¹¹ Tertullian regards the belief in the immortalization of man by baptism extraordinary and does not find it credible. Tertullian, "On Baptism", 3/669-670.

¹² John Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1845), 406.

¹³ Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. Rosemary Sheed (New York: Sheed & Ward, 1996), 188-197.

¹⁴ The baptism of blood was practiced in the cult of Cybele. Everett Ferguson, "Baptism", *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (Great Britain: Routledge, 1999), 1/160. Also see. Mustafa Erdem, "Hiristiyanlıktaki Vaftiz Anlayışı Üzerine Bir Araştırma", *Ankara Üniversitesi İlahiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 34/1 (1995), 133-154.

¹⁵ To illustrate; it is stated in the section of Torah's Numbers (19/1-22) and Leviticus (14, 15, 16/24-28) that the ablution should be taken before entering the sacred places and this bath wipes away certain sins. Meslin, "Baptism", 2/779-781. Jacop also blessed

John the Baptist was baptized in the Jordan River; the Mandaeans also received their baptismal practices from the example of John the Baptist. They carried out their baptism rites in the flowing water of a symbolic Jordan River by command of their holy books.¹⁶ Once again, when we glance at the practice of the baptism in Christianity, no doubt the first name that comes to mind is again John the Baptist. He baptized Jesus, as baptized those who came to him and wanted to be baptized.¹⁷ However, the manifestations of the Father and the Holy Spirit during Jesus' baptism give it a completely new dimension.¹⁸ Then Jesus commissioned his apostles/disciples to baptize people in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit;¹⁹ the apostles continued to practice the baptism as practiced by John the Baptist until the descent of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.²⁰ But the apostles, emphasizing the importance of a new faith,

Joseph's older descendants Manasseh and Ephraim by means of touching his hands on them. Tertullian, "On Baptism", 3/672-673.

¹⁶ Meslin, "Baptism", 2/779-781.

¹⁷ After John the Baptist baptized Jesus said that "He (Jesus) will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." Matthew, 3/11-12; Luke, 3/16; Mark, 1/8; John, 1/33. In interpreting this statement, Tertullian states that baptism with the Holy Spirit is sincere and determined in his/her belief; and baptism by fire indicates that his faith is not contrived and unstable. Thus, one is baptized for trial not for salvation. Tertullian, "On Baptism", 3/674, Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 412.

¹⁸ This is described in the Gospel of Mark as follows: "At that time, Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John the Baptist in the Jordan. Immediately coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Holy Spirit descending upon Him like a dove". Mark, 1/9-10, Matthew, 3/16. Because of these statements, Tertullian interprets the baptism of John the Baptist as regret baptism and Jesus' baptism as the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Robert E. Roberts, *The Theology of Tertullian* (London: The University of London, Thesis Approved for The Degree of Doctor of Divinity, 1924), 195.

¹⁹ Matthew, 28/19; John, 4/1-2.

²⁰ Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 411. Pentecost (Whitsunday); one of the important feasts which was celebrated by church in memory of the descent of the Holy Spirit. This feast is the ten days following the Holy Thursday or the ascension of Jesus. William Staunton, "Whitesunday", *An Ecclesiastical Dictionary* (New York: The General Protestant Episcopal Sunday School Union and Church Book Society, 1861), 1/674-675. [Note: An Ecclesiastical Dictionary will be referred to as AED.]

stated that candidates for baptism should also confess the faith of the trinity as follows:

“The candidate of baptism must be baptized in running water in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. If there is no flowing water, he/she should be baptized in other waters. If there is no cold water, then he/she should be baptized in hot water. But if it is not possible to find both, then the water should be poured out thrice upon his/her head into the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”.²¹

Again, Saint Paul, who is a central figure in Christianity, spoke for the first time about the theological and symbolic meaning of Christian baptism²² and defined baptism “as the gift of regeneration and renewal”. According to him, a sinner is purified from his sins and renewal by means of baptism.²³

In the early centuries of Christianity there was no account of the sacraments of the church, no formulated doctrine was also available. The basis of the practice of baptism was attached to the commandment of Jesus to his disciples;²⁴ it has been applied in some way to the present as a condition of being able to take part in salvation and being accepted into the community of church.²⁵ In the early centuries, baptism was performed on the night of Easter²⁶ and Pentecost and was practiced only

²¹ “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”, *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Company, 1886), 7/379, fn. 20.

²² Romans, 6/3-4, Colossians, 2/12; Titus, 3/5.

²³ Meslin, “Baptism”, 2/781.

²⁴ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them”. Matthew, 28/19.

²⁵ “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”, 7/379; Justin Martyr, “First Apology”, *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 1/183; Irenaeus, “Against Heresies”, *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1913), 1/444; Tertullian, “On Baptism”, 3/676; “On Prescription Against Heretics”, 3/247. Lars Hartman, *Into the Name of the Lord Jesus’ Baptism in the Early Church*, ed. John Barclay et. al. (Edinburg: T&T Clark, 1997), 150, fn. 13. Also see. J. F. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction of the Early History of Christian Doctrine to the Time of Council of Chalcedon* (London: Methuen & Co, 1903), 376. In the meantime, let us note that the ritual of circumcision was preserved among those who converted from Judaism to Christianity in the early periods. Staunton, “Infant Baptism”, *AED*, 1/391.

²⁶ Easter is the first and most important of Christian feasts. Christians celebrate the crucifixion, death and especially the resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after his death. For more information see. John F. Baldwin, “Easter”, *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones (New York: Thomson Gale, 2005), 4/2579-2580.

by the bishops.²⁷ The practice of baptism, which was continued by the apostles, was repeated almost literally with the doctrine in the texts of New Testament by the early church fathers and fourth and fifth century writers. The development within this period was in the application of the principles of baptism to the new circumstances and in the accompanying of the ritual elements.²⁸ Although it is possible to encounter references to baptism by early church fathers and apologists outside of the New Testament,²⁹ we may state that the earliest description about the rite of baptism belongs to Justin Martyr (d. A.D. 165). Justin mentions that they were baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and gives reference the word of Jesus "You will not enter the kingdom of God unless you are baptized".³⁰ To Justin, just as Abraham had made a covenant with God provided that he was circumcised; Christians had also made a covenant with God by means of being baptized.³¹ Again Irenaeus (d. A.D. 202), who is a contemporary of Tertullian, states that Jesus Christ was baptized when he was thirty years old;³² after his baptism he did not suffer any twelve months and that baptism meant rebirth.³³ To him, Jesus came to save everyone (infants, children, young and old people) through himself.³⁴ Clement of Alexandria (d. A.D. 217) and probably the Ebionites in general gave the highest importance to baptism. Because Jesus became the Messiah/Christ and was adopted as a Son by the Father only after he

²⁷ Meslin, "Baptism", *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2/781.

²⁸ Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 378.

²⁹ Related references see. "The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles", 7/379; Barnabas, "The Epistle of Barnabas", *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 1/144; Hermas, "The Pastor of Hermas", *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), 2/13-14; Ignatius, "Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians", *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1913), 1/57.

³⁰ John, 3/5, Justin Martyr, "First Apology", *ANF*, 1/183.

³¹ Justin Martyr, "Dialogue With Trypho", *ANF*, 1/216.

³² Luke, 3/23.

³³ Irenaeus, "Against Heresies", *ANF*, 1/391, 444, fn. 10.

³⁴ Irenaeus, "Against Heresies", *ANF*, 1/391. Based on this statement of Irenaeus, researchers like Wall and Walker point out to the infant baptism in pre- Tertullian period. Irenaeus, "Against Heresies", *ANF*, 1/391, fn. 9. Williston Walker, *Great Men of the Christian Church* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1908), 26.

was baptized.³⁵ But Ebionites do not find infant baptism reasonable. As a reason of this, they bring forward that Jesus was baptized as an adult.³⁶ According to Clement, Jesus was perfected by John the Baptist when he was thirty years old.³⁷ The reason for this is a voice coming from heaven after the Jesus Christ's baptism, as stated in the Gospels as follows: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".³⁸

1. Tertullian and His Understanding of Baptism

Tertullian played a major role in representing the traditional practice of baptism in the church until the end of the second century and the first quarter of the third century.³⁹ His work *On Baptism*,⁴⁰ which he wrote about the ritual of baptism and has managed to survive until today, has an important share in his role.⁴¹ There are two reasons why he wrote this work: First one is to give information about baptism to those who have converted to new religion; the second one is to refute the views of Quintilla, a famous instructor of the Cainites⁴² heresies which

³⁵ Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Publication Society, 1900), 1/178-179.

³⁶ Newman, *A Manual of Church History*, 1/179-180.

³⁷ Clement of Alexandria, "The Stromata", *ANF*, ed. Alexander Roberts - James Donaldson (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Publishing Company, 1885), 2/333; "The Instructor", *ANF*, 2/215, 222.

³⁸ Matthew, 3/17; Mark, 1/11; Luke, 3/22, Clement of Alexandria, "The Instructor", *ANF*, 2/215.

Tye Rambo, "Tertullian on Baptism", access: November 20, 2013, <https://biblicalspirituality.files.wordpress.com/2010/03/terullian-on-baptism-by-tye-rambo.pdf>.

⁴⁰ This work, written by Tertullian in Greek, was probably written in the early third century (198-203). Completion of the work coincides with Tertullian's adoption of Montanism. Ernest Evans, *Tertullian's Homily on Baptism* (London: S.P.C.K, 1964), XI.

⁴¹ Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (United States of America: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 2009), 336. Tertullian is the first church father to use the phrase "the Sacrament of baptism" and "Eucharist". Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 377.

⁴² Tertullian mentions Cain as the ancestor of the Cainite sect. Tertullian probably called Quintilla as Cainite because of her similarity to Caine. Quintilla herself took this name for she stood against the divine law; not because she is really a member of the sect. See. Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of The Second and Third Centuries*, 18, fn. 1.

is a sect of Gnosticism;⁴³ because according to Quintilla faith alone is sufficient for salvation and baptism is not necessary.⁴⁴ His propaganda gave Tertullian an opportunity to rectify the misunderstanding, at the same time to investigate the nature and benefit of the baptism.⁴⁵ At this point, Tertullian utters that the belief in God and Christ, which is adopted by Quintilla and others like him, is different and also they do not even have the right to teach an authentic doctrine.⁴⁶ At the same time, Tertullian mentions that water baptism was performed in religious rituals by pagans. However, he regards their practices useless because they belong to the devil. In addition, he compares Christian baptism with Jewish daily washings and thinks that they are defiled each day, and therefore should be bathed every day.⁴⁷ Tertullian also deals with the baptism of John the Baptist,⁴⁸ whether Jesus himself baptized someone or not,⁴⁹ and whether Jesus' apostles are baptized by someone or not,⁵⁰ the invalidity of heretical baptism,⁵¹ the blood baptism or

⁴³ Pierre de Labriolle, *History and Literature of Christianity from Tertullian to Boethius*, Trans. Herbert Wilson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1924), 86.

⁴⁴ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/669.

⁴⁵ William Ramsey, "Tertullianus", *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, ed. William Smith (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1870), 3/1007.

⁴⁶ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/669, fn. 4.

⁴⁷ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/676.

⁴⁸ Those who argue that baptism is not necessary, give evidence to that even the baptism of John the Baptist is questioned by the Lord himself; in this context, they used Jesus' statement to the Pharisees in the form of "Where was John's authority to baptize from? From heaven or from men? (Matthew, 21/25). Tertullian refutes their claims, arguing that the baptism of John the Baptist is divine. Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/673-674.

⁴⁹ At the point of Jesus' baptism, some claim that not Jesus himself, his disciples baptized by bringing evidence from John 4/2. Tertullian, referring to Matthew 3/11 and Luke 3/16, says that they have misunderstood that statement. According to him, it is not necessary for the king or the administrator to do these things himself when it was said "the king declares the decree" or "the administrator beat the man with a wand". The work may be attributed to the king or the administrator, when employees at their disposal perform these tasks. Just like this, the baptism of the apostles can be attributed to Jesus. Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/674.

⁵⁰ Tertullian focuses on several possibilities for baptism of the apostles. The first possibility is that the apostles received the baptism of John the Baptist, John 12/3-5 points to this situation. The second possibility is that the apostles received a representative baptism. Their diving into the water as they grapple with the waves in

martyrdom and whether baptism performed by women is valid or not in his work *On Baptism*.⁵²

Tertullian explains the purpose and importance of baptism rite as that one is free from all sins by means of baptism and has the capacity to achieve eternal life.⁵³ Human beings, who defiled themselves by committing sins, may get rid of these sins by being baptized with water.⁵⁴ However according to him (Tertullian) these sins do not expose itself in the body. Only those who have sinned will pollute their souls. The soul belongs to the Lord; the body is his servant. But both body and soul share the sin equally. As a matter of fact, the spirit was corporeally washed in the water; the body was at the same time cleansed spiritually.⁵⁵ In addition, the expressions of Tertullian such as that "Happiness is our sacrament of water", "We are little fish"⁵⁶ and "We (Christians) are born in water"⁵⁷ point out how much he attaches importance to baptism.

the boat indicates this. Matthew 8/24. Again, it is proof that Saint Peter was completely submerged when he walked on the water. Matthew, 14/29-30. Finally, Tertullian emphasizes the possibility that the Lord will declare that a man can be forgiven without baptism. Matthew, 9/2, 22; 12/8-9. Tertullian argues that the status of the apostles does not point to Christians, believing that baptism should be preserved. Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/675. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 360.

⁵¹ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/677.

⁵² Alexander Souter, *Tertullian's Treatises Concerning Prayer, Concerning Baptism* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1919), XVI-XVII.

⁵³ Tertullian comments the bath that stated in I. Corinthians 6/9-10 as the removal of sins which was committed before baptism. Tertullian, "On Modesty", ANF, 4/91. The sins committed before baptism have been completely forgiven by Christ's grace. At this point Tertullian makes an explanation such as that "Christ has been crucified for our sins". Tertullian, "On Modesty", ANF, 4/95.

⁵⁴ Tertullian, "On Repentance", ANF, 3/661-662; "On Baptism", ANF, 3/669, 672.

⁵⁵ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/671.

⁵⁶ Here, Tertullian uses the word 'ikhtus' which means "fish" and refers to Christ. Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/669, fn. 3. The small fish mentioned above is a cryptical sign among Christians and implies baptism. Frederic W. Farrar, *Lives of the Fathers Sketches of Church History in Biography* (Edinburg: Adam and Charles Black, 1889), 1/169, fn. 2. Tertullian refers to Christians in general with the phrase of small fish, not really little children. Bennett, *The Theology of the Early Christian Church*, 197.

⁵⁷ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/669.

Tertullian draws attention to the unity of faith and baptism⁵⁸ and argues that no one can achieve salvation without baptism.⁵⁹ Again, Tertullian claims that the baptism will restore the spirit of God, who was taken in creation by Adam and lost due to his sin.⁶⁰ In fact, in the first creation Adam took the spirit of God but he lost it by sin. For this reason, Tertullian associates rebirth with baptism and calls baptism as the second birth.⁶¹ Because the spirit is reshaped by water and it gains more power. Thus, the former corruptness of spirit is abandoned aside.⁶² Tertullian explains this case as follows: "We are born in water and we can be saved by staying in water".⁶³ Tertullian was the first writer to speak of the Holy Spirit's commemoration and the consecration of the water through prayer.⁶⁴ In short, baptism, according to him, allows the Holy Spirit to be taken. The Holy Spirit makes man ready to regain the image of God that he had previously lost.⁶⁵

Apart from water baptism, Tertullian also includes a second baptism which is known as blood baptism. According to him, both baptisms have come out from the wounds in Christ's pierced side due to the spear wound that he received from the side of his body. So that those who believe in His blood can be washed with water; let those who bathe in the water be as if they have been drinking His blood.⁶⁶ Tertullian also associates baptism with martyrdom and expresses the credibility of

⁵⁸ Rambo, "Tertullian On Baptism".

⁵⁹ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/674-676. Tertullian refers here to both John, 3/5; and Matthew 28/19, the instruction of baptism. Therefore, to Tertullian, "faith" is not sufficient by itself, baptism is essential for salvation as well. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 381, fn. 1. John N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), 209.

⁶⁰ Tertullian distinguishes the soul of a baptist from his/her previous spirit. At this point, Tertullian refers to the statement of Gospel of John "In baptism not only given to us the Holy Spirit but also we were made clean by the action of the angel" (John, 5/4-9) and so he mentions that they are ready for the Holy Spirit. Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/672. Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 366.

⁶¹ Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 405-406.

⁶² Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/671.

⁶³ Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 381.

⁶⁴ Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 381, fn. 4.

⁶⁵ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/672, Eric Osborn, *Tertullian, First Theologian of the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 242.

⁶⁶ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/677.

martyrdom with these words of Jesus: "I have a baptism to be baptized with. How distressed I am till it is accomplished!"⁶⁷ "This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood".⁶⁸ As it is understood from these statements, for Tertullian martyrdom is a different form of baptism and it abolished the necessity of water baptism.⁶⁹ In other words, if a person has not been baptized before, blood baptism replaces water baptism. If he or she has been baptized with water before, but has lost the grace of baptism, the martyrdom renews the water baptism.⁷⁰ At this point he (Tertullian) argues that martyrdom is a second and effective baptism for everyone except schismatics and heretics.⁷¹

2. The Basis and Application of the Baptism Rite

There have been some differences in the basis and application of the sacrament of baptism in time. Drawing attention to the difference in the tradition of baptism, Tertullian states that the faith is sufficient given the example of Abraham's gaining God's satisfaction through faith without baptism; on the other hand, Jesus' birth, death and resurrection changed this truth. Moreover he responds to those who argue that there is no need for baptism as follows: "The latter things nullify previous things".⁷² Tertullian points out the legitimacy of the sacrament of baptism with the help of the statement of Matthew's "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy spirit";⁷³ the belief of being baptized and obtaining the Holy Spirit⁷⁴ require baptism to be included in the kingdom of God.⁷⁵ On the other hand, in the statements of the Gospels about the blessing of little children, it is stated that little children were brought to touch Jesus, but Jesus rebuked those who brought the disciples. Jesus reacted angrily to this situation as follows:

⁶⁷ Luke, 12/50.

⁶⁸ 1 John, 5/6.

⁶⁹ Roberts, *The Theology of Tertullian*, 197.

⁷⁰ Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 386.

⁷¹ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/676-677.

⁷² Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/675-676.

⁷³ Matthew, 19/13-15; Mark, 10/13-16; Luke, 18/15-17.

⁷⁴ John, 3/5.

⁷⁵ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/675-676, Souter, *Tertullian's Treatises Concerning Prayer, Concerning Baptism*, 64.

“Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”⁷⁶ And this statement was understood by some as the proof of infant baptism. In the patristic period, the only above section, which we quoted from the Gospels, was used for infant baptism.⁷⁷ However the expression which was mentioned in Matthew (unless you become as little children)⁷⁸ does not refer to infant baptism as the interlocutors are not child.⁷⁹

Tertullian, regarding the application of the rite of baptism, remarks that they are immersed for the name of each individual entities,⁸⁰ based upon Jesus Christ's command to the apostles “not once to the name of one; they must immerse thrice in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”.⁸¹ Likewise, his quotation from Matthew 28:19 refers to both the baptismal rule and the manner of practising the sacrament.⁸² Eventually, Tertullian himself was also baptized in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit by following the theology of the trinity.⁸³

According to Tertullian, one often prepares for baptism by worshiping, fasting and observing night worship before he/she is baptized. Then he/she confesses his/her sins in front of the community⁸⁴ and confesses in a majestic ceremony at the disposal of the president

⁷⁶ Matthew, 19/13-15; Mark, 10/13-16; Luke, 18/15-17.

⁷⁷ Tertullian, “On Baptism”, ANF, 3/677-678.

⁷⁸ Matthew, 18/3.

⁷⁹ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 160.

⁸⁰ Tertullian, “Against Praxeas”, ANF, 3/623, Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 364. However, Tertullian argues that the immersion in water three times is based on tradition, custom and belief. Tertullian, “The Chaplet”, ANF, 3/97-95, David K. Bernard, *A History of Christian Doctrine* (United States of America: Word Aflame Press, 1995), 1/77-78.

⁸¹ Matthew, 28/19.

⁸² Tertullian, “On Baptism”, ANF, 3/676, Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 364-365.

⁸³ Tertullian's baptism is probably soon after he converted to Christianity. As it is understood from the expressions in his work *On Baptism* (happiness is our baptism), he felt the effect of baptism with his sincere belief. Farrar, *Lives of the Fathers Sketches of Church History in Biography*, 169. Most of the church fathers came from a pagan family, but almost all of them were baptized when they were adults, except Irenaeus. William Wall, *The History of Infant-Baptism*, ed. Henry Cotton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1862), 1/77-78.

⁸⁴ Matthew, 3/6.

that he/she has abandoned the devil, his pomp and his games.⁸⁵ Afterward he/she is submerged thrice to the blessed water.⁸⁶ However, these applications are not ordered in the Bible; they are based on customs and traditions.⁸⁷ Then honey and milk are tested⁸⁸ to the candidate of baptism and anointed with blessed unction.⁸⁹ After this process the cross mark is made on the forehead of the candidate.⁹⁰ Lastly, as a sign of Jacop's hand touching the sons of Joseph to bless them, the baptist puts his hand on the candidate.⁹¹ Thus, the candidate, who was baptized, had built a wall against the temptations of the devil.⁹² The process of baptism is not complete with this, the candidate refrains himself/herself from the daily bath for a whole week for being as in usual practice.⁹³

In Tertullian's days, it is seen that immediately after the baptism of an adult, he/she was subjected to a confirmation ritual which was an admission rite of to the Christianity. That is to say the confirmation formed a part of the sacrament of baptism. Some argue that baptism ought to be followed by fasting; because Jesus immediately after his baptism fasted forty days and forty nights. However, Tertullian remarks that baptism ceremony opens the door of salvation and is an occasion of

⁸⁵ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/678-679, Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 408.

⁸⁶ The earliest explanation for the blessing of baptism came from Tertullian. W. B. Marriott, "Baptism", *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, ed. William Smith - Samuel Cheetham (London: John Murray Albemarle Street, 1876), 1/159.

⁸⁷ Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 408.

⁸⁸ With this application is referred to the sanctification of those who are appointed to the rabbis, which are applied in accordance with Moses law. Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 415.

⁸⁹ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/672, "On the Resurrection of the Flesh", 3/551, 564.

⁹⁰ Kaye states that the sign of the cross on the forehead of the baptism candidate and the blessing of bread in the Lord's Supper is taken as an example from Mithra's mysteries. Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 415.

⁹¹ Kaye said that the handling of the baptized child in Christianity was delayed until the child attended the confirmation ceremony; however, since the majority of those who were baptized at the time of Tertullian were adults, the confirmation was carried out immediately after the baptism and was part of the ritual. Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 409.

⁹² Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/679.

⁹³ Tertullian, "The Chaplet", ANF, 3/94, Joseph Cullen Ayer, *A Source Book for Ancient Church History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1939), 232.

joy; Christ's conduct in this instance was not designed to be an example for imitation. Because the practice of Christ is only a particular reference to certain events in the life of Moses.⁹⁴

According to Tertullian, the sacrament of baptism can be practiced every day and hour of the year.⁹⁵ However, Good Friday⁹⁶ before the Easter and the feast of Pentekost and the days between these two feasts are the most appropriate period of time for this service.⁹⁷ Because during this time the passion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit took place.⁹⁸ In addition, Tertullian comments the statement allegorically that when Jesus about to celebrate the last Passover, on the question of his apostles, "Where do you want us to go and prepare that you may eat the Passover? So, Jesus sent out two of His disciples/apostles, telling them, 'Go into the city and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him'",⁹⁹ and he concludes from this sentence that Pentecost is a joyful time to be baptized.¹⁰⁰ The best time for baptism is midnight and the ritual begins with the lighting torches and according to the custom the men are baptized first then the women. During the following week after baptism the newly baptized one wears white garments as a sign of his/her purity.¹⁰¹

Tertullian argues that the baptism can be practiced anywhere. According to him, there is no difference between the person who will be

⁹⁴ Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 409-410.

⁹⁵ Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 423.

⁹⁶ Holy Friday; it was taken its name from the sacred effects of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Staunton, "Good Friday", *AED*, 1/348.

⁹⁷ Tertullian is the first church father to say that especially Pentecost and Easter were suitable for baptism. But he is also cautious in stating that baptism can always be practiced. See. Bethune-Baker, *An Introduction to the Early History of Christian Doctrine*, 382, fn. 1. In Eastern churches, the time of the baptism is associated with Epiphany. Epiphany or the appearance of Jesus Christ to Gentiles occurs on January 6, and that day expresses the intellectual people coming from the East to obey the baby Jesus. (Matthew, 2/4), Staunton, "Epiphany", *AED*, 1/295-296.

⁹⁸ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/678, Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 423.

⁹⁹ Mark, 14/12-13; Luke, 21/10.

¹⁰⁰ Coxe says Tertullian marks here the fifty days that will last until the Pentecost day after Easter. Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/678, fn. 13.

¹⁰¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church: Ante-Nicene Christianity A.D. 100-325* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 1998), 2/238-239.

baptized in the sea or in the pool, in a river or in a lake or in a pond.¹⁰² Because the baptism of John the Baptist on the Jordan river and the baptism of Peter in the Tiber river are the same thing.¹⁰³ If the candidates for baptism want to be baptized in the church, they are baptized on one side of the church -the section of baptism- or a place which is close to the church.¹⁰⁴ This baptismal section may be a water tank, baptism container or a pool that is wide enough for several people to enter.¹⁰⁵

According to Tertullian, the authority of operation of the sacrament of baptism primarily belongs to the bishop. With his consent, the secondary degree presbyterians and deacons might perform this rite.¹⁰⁶ Whether there are none of them a layman also may administer this rite.¹⁰⁷ Because according to Tertullian what is equally received can be equally given. That is to say the baptism can be administered by all. However, he argues that baptism can not be administered by a woman in any way.¹⁰⁸ Because according to him women are not allowed to administer the rite of the Mass; just as women are not allowed to speak in the church,¹⁰⁹ it is not permitted to a woman to teach and baptize. In short, the women should not demand any of the responsibilities of the men and should not perform the duty of priesthood.¹¹⁰

3. The Delay of Infant Baptism

In Christianity, the tradition of baptizing very young children (infants) was practiced in the early periods as immersion in water. However, the question of whether the infant baptism was practiced in

¹⁰² Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/671.

¹⁰³ At this point, Tertullian refers to the New Testament narrative (Acts 8/26-40) that Philip baptized a castrated Ethiopian by chance in the desert with water, and he explains that the baptism of Philip may lead to more or less salvation than other baptisms. Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/671.

¹⁰⁴ Staunton, "Baptism", *AED*, 1/91.

¹⁰⁵ The baptism section consists of two parts, in one part, men are baptized and in the other part, women are baptized. Wall, *The History of Infant-Baptism*, 2/385.

¹⁰⁶ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/677.

¹⁰⁷ Stuart A. Donaldson, *Church Life and Thought in North Africa A.D. 200* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909), 54.

¹⁰⁸ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/677. Tertullian is the first church father to express views on women about having no authority to baptize. See. Marriott, "Baptism", *A Dictionary of Christian Antiquities*, 1/167.

¹⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians, 14/34-35; 1 Timothy, 2/11-12.

¹¹⁰ Tertullian, "On the Veiling of Virgins", *ANF*, 4/33.

early Christianity has been questioned since the sixteenth century.¹¹¹ Although there are different opinions among researchers about when the infant baptism began; it is understood that infant baptism was known in Tertullian's time. Some researchers have claimed that infant baptism was a common practice before Tertullian.¹¹² Schaff, one of these researchers, claims that the infant baptism is based upon Christ's call as in the following words: "Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven".¹¹³ Again, the fact that infant baptism was not mentioned as an innovation in Tertullian's time reveals that this practice dates back to Tertullian.¹¹⁴

Those who argue that infant baptism began in Tertullian's time put forward that historical data on this issue refer that it began in North Africa.¹¹⁵ In this context, Aland argues that infant baptism is a newly-introduced practice in Tertullian's time.¹¹⁶ The fact that Tertullian is the only one among the early writers to speak against infant baptism confirms this assertion.¹¹⁷ In addition, Tertullian's objection to infant baptism in his work *On Baptism*¹¹⁸ and the fact that infant baptism was a known practice at that time provides evidence for those who argue that this practice emerged in Tertullian's time. Therefore, the fact that there is no significant record about child baptism until the time of Tertullian, that is, during the whole second century; on the contrary, there is a record that the practice of baptism started during the Tertullian period and his opinion on this matter seems to justify those who claim that the infant baptism began during the time of Tertullian.¹¹⁹ The

¹¹¹ E. Glenn Hinson, "Infant Baptism", *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (Great Britain: Routledge, 1999), 1/571-573.

¹¹² Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2/245.

¹¹³ Matthew, 19/14, Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2/245.

¹¹⁴ W. J. Lowe, *Baptism Its Mode and Subjects* (Edinburgh: Turnbull and Spears, 1899), 145-146.

¹¹⁵ Kris Ryan, "Infant Baptism in the Writings of the Early Church Fathers Prior to Augustine", access: August 23, 2014. www.ibrarian.net/navon/paper/By_Kris_Ryan.pdf, (23.08.2014).

¹¹⁶ Kurt Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?*, trans. G. R. Beasley - Murray (London: Westminster Press, 1963), 51.

¹¹⁷ Lowe, *Baptism Its Mode and Subjects*, 145-146.

¹¹⁸ Tertullian is the first church father to express an opinion against infant baptism. Bernard, *A History of Christian Doctrine*, 1/62-63.

¹¹⁹ Baptist W. Noel, *Essay on Christian Baptism* (London: James Nisbet and Co, 1849), 251.

objection of Tertullian is a sign that this practice has not become widespread and is not generally accepted. However, Tertullian never said that he objected to a new practice. He merely argued that since children were innocent, it was unnecessary to baptize them and that it was risky to baptize them because of the possibility that children would fall into wickedness.¹²⁰

Then, what motivated Tertullian to oppose the practice of infant baptism? Is it that he considers children innocent or deprived of children's mental ability? Or is it the fact that the great sins after baptism will not be forgiven? Before answering this question, let us note that Tertullian bases why he opposes the infant baptism on Jesus' words in Matthew 19:14 as in "Let the little children come to Me and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven".¹²¹ He considers infant baptism to be valid, although he argues that it is better to postpone it until later.¹²² However, he implies that the infant baptism can be performed with the help of the godmother or godfather according to the tradition.¹²³ The godmother or godfather comes to the place of baptism on behalf of the children and they promise that the children themselves are not eligible for baptism by their ages.¹²⁴ Again turning back to the answer of our question, Tertullian argues that children are innocent.¹²⁵ In this sense, he poses a question to the child baptists "Why is the innocent period of life rushed to forgive sins?" He then states that the child should not be rushed to be baptized in line with his belief that the child is innocent and that each individual should postpone baptism according to his/her creation, condition or even age.¹²⁶ Yet elsewhere he expresses the opposite view and shares the belief that "every soul ruled in Adam will continue to exist in Adam as long as not being enrolled in Christ".¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 366.

¹²¹ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/678.

¹²² Rambo, "Tertullian On Baptism".

¹²³ The practice of godmother or godfather was first mentioned by Tertullian. Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2/238.

¹²⁴ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/672, 677-678, Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 410.

¹²⁵ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/678.

¹²⁶ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/678, Hinson, "Infant Baptism", 1/571.

¹²⁷ At this point, Kaye states that Tertullian's ideas are incompatible; for he on one hand recommends the delaying of infant baptism; on the other hand, he argues that

Moreover, to him, this spirit is not clean unless it is accepted in Christ. It is sinful because it is not clean.¹²⁸ At this point, Aland states that infant baptism is widely the result of original sin teachings. But the children will not need to be baptized because the baptism means forgiveness of sins and children are innocent.¹²⁹ Secondly, Tertullian argues that the belief is imperative to be baptized; however, the children do not need to be baptized, since they do not have ability of believing at early age.¹³⁰ Thirdly, Tertullian states that there is no order in the Bible concerning the baptism/non-baptism of children. That is, as the Bible does not assign a certain age to be baptized; it also does not indicate that there is an obstacle for children to do this practice.¹³¹ On the other hand, another reason for Tertullian's insistence on postponing infant baptism is the fear that great sins¹³² committed after baptism cannot be forgiven.¹³³ At this point we can state that Tertullian contradicts himself. Because Tertullian initially exhibited a more moderate perspective and argued that God was forgiving even if one committed a deadly sin;¹³⁴ after adopting Montanism, he sets out a more rigid point of view¹³⁵ and states that these sins will exclude one from eternal salvation.¹³⁶ This truth is probably the reason why Tertullian delayed infant Baptism.¹³⁷

baptism is necessary to free man from the harmful consequences of Adam's sin. Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 422-423.

¹²⁸ Tertullian, "A Treatise On the Soul", ANF, 3/220-221.

¹²⁹ Aland, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants*, 103-104.

¹³⁰ Tertullian, "On Baptism", ANF, 3/669, Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 387.

¹³¹ Staunton, "Infant Baptism", AED, 1/392.

¹³² About the great sins see. Tertullian, "On Modesty", ANF, 4/76.

¹³³ Tertullian, "On Repentance", ANF, 3/665-666, Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2/179, fn. 269.

¹³⁴ Tertullian, "On Repentance", ANF, 3/663. Tertullian, referring to Ezekiel 18/30-32, states that sins will be forgiven on the condition that a person repents and does not commit the same sin again after repentance, whether sins are committed physically, spiritually or with free will. Tertullian, "On Repentance", ANF, 3/659-660.

¹³⁵ Kaye reports that after Tertullian adopted Montanism, he could only repent for forgivable sins because of the strict teaching of this sect; as the great sins after baptism can only be cleansed by martyrdom, the second baptism. Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 321.

¹³⁶ 1 John, 5/16, Hebrews, 6/4-6; 10/26.

¹³⁷ Randolph A. Miller, *A Historical and Theological Look at the Doctrine of Christian Baptism* (United States of America: Writers Club Press, 2002), 136.

On the other hand, Tertullian encourages not only children, but also someone who has never been married or widowed, at least to delay baptism until they get married.¹³⁸ Because those who are in this situation are far from the temptations of the devil in particular points.¹³⁹ Likewise, Tertullian thinks that it is a more proper decision for elderly people to postpone baptism even if they follow the devil's motives. It is understood that according to Tertullian, the best baptism is the one that is left to the end.¹⁴⁰ Tertullian expresses this situation as follows: "If any of you had understood the importance of baptism very well, he would have been more concerned about receiving it rather than delaying it".¹⁴¹ Based on his statements, we can conclude that baptism can only be applied to those who feel ready to accept its responsibilities and those who act with this feeling.¹⁴²

Tertullian allowed children to be baptized in some cases, although some authors have shown him to be against infant baptism. For example, in the cases of sick and unlikely to live children, virgins, widows, etc., he approves of their baptism.¹⁴³

In conclusion, although Tertullian recommended to delay the infant baptism; his suggestion was not effective in North African churches;¹⁴⁴ the general practice of the church continued infant baptism.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁸ Miller, *A Historical and Theological Look at the Doctrine of Christian Baptism*, 136. At this point, Miller criticizes Tertullian and states that on the one hand he advocates delaying the baptisms of infants until they are older and on the other hand claims that singles and widows should postpone the baptism. Miller, *A Historical and Theological Look at the Doctrine of Christian Baptism*, 135.

¹³⁹ Roberts, *The Theology of Tertullian*, 198.

¹⁴⁰ Lowe, *Baptism Its Mode and Subjects*, 145.

¹⁴¹ Tertullian, "On Baptism", *ANF*, 3/677-678.

¹⁴² Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 386.

¹⁴³ Lowe, *Baptism Its Mode and Subjects*, 145. At this point, Miller criticizes Tertullian and asserts that he on the one hand defends that the healthy people should delay the baptism, while on the other hand he considers it necessary in situations such as illness and death. Miller, *A Historical and Theological Look at the Doctrine of Christian Baptism*, 135.

¹⁴⁴ Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, 2/247.

¹⁴⁵ Kaye, *Ecclesiastical History of the Second and Third Centuries*, 423.

Conclusion

Baptism has a long history. However, with the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist, the understanding of baptism gained a theological aspect and became linked to the confession of the faith of the trinity. The practice of baptism which occupied the mind of Tertullian, has also made him one of the pioneers about this subject. According to him, in human salvation the faith is alone not sufficient, but baptism is a must. In this sense, he declared a valid formula the statement from the Gospel of Matthew that was shown evidence about baptism. Again, baptism is not limited to Easter and Pentecost period, but it can be applied all the time; thus, he argued that it can be practiced by everyone except women and those who are considered as heretic by the church. He stated that martyrdom is a kind of baptism besides water baptism, it performs the same function as water baptism and even superior to it. Although he especially accepts infant baptism, the baptism of virgins, widows and even elderly, but he requested that this practice to be delayed. On the one hand, the children's innocence and inability to use their minds were effective in his view; on the other hand, the fear of forgiveness of sins committed after baptism played an important role. There are different approaches among researchers in terms of delaying baptism and inconsistency in Tertullian's views. In my opinion, both of the reasons mentioned above were effective in postponing baptism. Because if Tertullian had only brought innocence and mind to the forefront, he would not conclude that it would be better for widows and singles to delay the baptism. The change in his ideas is the fear that deadly sins committed after baptism cannot be forgiven. Therefore, according to him, the most valid baptism is the one that is left to the end.

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