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From Reader Review Christian Baptism for online ebook

Hannah Grant says

Thanks to my pastor's library, I read this book for a school project. While it was exactly the scope and length I was looking for, it was a more difficult read than I expected. One sentence is often three lines long and the sections about Greek words are written for people who actually know Greek script. :) I'm glad I read this book, though; it was very informative and a great resource.

Tirzah says

So glad I discovered this book! I wanted to know more about the subject of baptism, specifically about the mode of baptism (sprinkle or immersion?) and infant baptism (commanded by God or no?). I was raised believing one way and then in high school, I switched to a church that thought another. So since then, the subject of baptism has been a bit hazy for me until I read this book. Theologian John Murray lays it out somewhat simply (some of the Hebrew word references got confusing and some parts were a bit wordy) as he supports his views with multiple Scriptural references and other reputable theologians' references (i.e., John Calvin). While I may not thoroughly understand all of what he said, I walked away from *Christian Baptism* with greater knowledge of what baptism and infant baptism is and how it applies to the Christian and the Church.

William says

Chapter 2 is a clear and thorough look at what the Baptists historically insist: Baptism by immersion. Dr. Murray proves, with a detailed look at the Biblical texts, that the terms frequently used do not REQUIRE immersion. He painstakingly labors in the Old Testament and the New as well as looking at the LXX to make his argument. Dr. Murray argues that the terms typically referenced by Baptists are not accurately applied and have no grounding in Scripture.

Chapter Three is an examination of the visible and invisible Church distinction (a distinction that is often misunderstood and misread by Baptists). In this chapter Dr. Murray is setting the stage, arguing from the perspective of the Covenant, to lead us into a defense of paedobaptism.

More later...

Tom Rogstad says

Made me a Baptist.

Daniel says

I read this book to gain a better understanding of the reformed view of baptism. It was very well written. Prayerfully, I will continue studying this issue. For one who can not read Greek or Hebrew letters (which includes me) the chapter about the mode of baptism may be confusing.

E says

Good look at baptism from a man with impeccable Reformed credentials. Some reader of this book in the past was evidently not a fan, based on the questions he penciled into the margins at key junctures. I enjoyed interacting with these questions as well. By the end of the book, I think this anonymous interlocutor had scarcely a leg on which to stand. For Murray did a great job.

He begins by looking at uses of the word bapto and baptizo, and their OT analogues. He concludes, with justification, that the word does not require a meaning of immersion, and at times cannot mean immersion. This chapter was not terribly related to the rest of the book, but it did make a clear case for the validity of baptism by sprinkling or pouring.

He heart of the book begins with a look at the church--at the difference between the visible and invisible church, and the requirements of admission into each. He looks at the privilege of covenant membership in the OT, and its continuation in the New. He looks at infant baptism specifically, particularly how there is no reason in the NT to suppose that the covenant is no longer applied to children. In fact, there is sufficient evidence to support the opposite. He deals with objections to infant baptism before addressing just who is to be baptized.

He concludes with a discussion of baptism's efficacy. Although we sometimes separate in our minds the efficacy of infant and believers' baptism, Murray points out that there is absolutely no warrant for doing so. In this discussion, however, I felt that Murray shied away from the power of baptism, out of a fear of appearing sacerdotal. He writes, "baptism does not convey or confer the grace which it signifies." I disagree. I believe that God, in fact, does use baptism to do that very thing. He does not have to--we can't force the giving of grace by baptizing someone, for it is not automatic, but I don't like the distinction he makes that "Baptism is a means of grace but not a means of conferring the grace represented." I do not think we need to tie God's hands in this manner.

Richard Minor says

This book was a strong argument for its position. The mode of baptism was pretty an interesting and thought provoking chapter for a baptist to read.

Felipe says

Very good!

Paul Wichert says

This book was a quite readable John Murray, in fact a very quick read (90 pages). It is essentially an apology for paedobaptism, deriving the practice from God's covenant with Abraham, and answering some Baptist objections. Murray is a theological giant and it shows in this short work. Key quote: "The argument for infant baptism rests upon the recognition that God's redemptive action and revelation in this world are covenantal...Embedded in this covenantal action of God is the principle that the infant seed of believers are embraced with their parents in the covenant relation and provision." (Children of believers ARE different than all other children). An important read.

Lundy says

A very short explanation of Baptism. A vital classic for every Christian to read.

Chad Warner says

Contains some of the best defenses and explanations I've read for infant baptism, and for sprinkling or dipping as biblical modes. It's essentially a refutation of the Baptist position on those issues. The main text heavily references the Bible, and the footnotes cite many Reformed sources.

Import of Baptism

Baptisms performed by John the Baptist and by disciples during Jesus' ministry (John 3:22, 26, 4:1-2) were of different nature than baptism instituted by Jesus in Matt 28:19.

Baptism is the circumcision of NT (Col 2:11-12).

Mode of Baptism

Nothing in the Hebrew or Greek words, or in context, requires immersion (except Lev 11:32; Job 9:31); dipping or sprinkling are adequate.

Even when words translated "baptize" or "baptism" refer in a specific case to immersion, that doesn't prove the words always mean immersion.

Several Levitical lustrations were performed by sprinkling (Lev 14:4-7, 16, 49-53, 16:19; Num 8:5-7, etc.), and these are alluded to as baptisms in Heb 9:10-23.

Baptism represents sprinkling of blood of Christ (Heb 9:13, 14, 22, 10:22, 12:24; 1 Pet 1:2).

Infant Baptism

The Church is one in both dispensations (OT & NT). The NT economy is the unfolding and fulfillment of the covenant made with Abraham, necessarily implying the unity and continuity of the Church.

OT covenant included infants (infants received circumcision).

Circumcision was primarily a spiritual sign (Acts 7:8), and only secondarily a sign of family, race, nation, privilege.

Circumcision's 3 elements - union and communion with God, removal of defilement, righteousness of faith - are closely similar to the elements of baptism.

NT doesn't revoke or imply revocation of inclusion of infants in covenant, or their participation in covenant sign and seal. No express command for infant baptism is necessary because of continuation of OT command.

Scope of NT covenant is broader than OT, so it shouldn't exclude infants who were included in OT.

Abraham knew the covenant wouldn't be established with Ishmael, and Rebecca knew Esau was to be rejected, yet these parents circumcised those sons to obey God's ordinance. We baptize infants because of God's ordinance, not because we know our children will be saved.

When Jesus said "of such is the kingdom of God," there were infants in that group of children (Luke 18:15).

Paul includes children saints in Eph 6:1, 4; Col 3:20-21.

1 Cor 7:14 shows that children of even 1 believer are considered "holy" in the sense of connection and privilege (not in sense of regeneration, as seen by context).

3 of 12 recorded baptisms are household baptisms (Acts 16:15, 33, 34; 1 Cor 1:16; Acts 10:47-48, 11:14), indicating that household baptism was common practice, and it's extremely likely that some households contained infants.

Acts 2:38-39 says promise is to children of believers. This is same idea as OT Gen 17:7 and Deut 29:10-13.

Parallels between circumcision and baptism, and Passover and Lord's Supper

Circumcision was administered to infants

Circumcision was administered only once

Circumcision was rite of initiation

No evidence that infants partook of Passover

Passover meal not appropriate to infants

Passover repeated; circumcision not

Baptism represents initiation into body of Christ; Lord's Supper represents edification of members of Christ's body.

Baptism is a means of grace to signify and confirm grace, but not a means of conferring the grace it signifies.

JM says

Very rarely do I read a book that convinces me to take the opposite viewpoint of what it advocates. This one did.

As far as the general meaning and significance of baptism goes, Murray is spot on. His section of how baptism in Romans 6 pictures union with Christ is excellent, and his discussion of church membership from

a Reformed perspective is helpful. That being said, his section on linguistic and exegetical data for immersion took logical leaps that were surprising from as seasoned a theologian as he is. Additionally, as with all those argue paedobaptism that I've read, he overrides all opposing data by seeing such continuity in the covenants that he flattens out the contours of the NT text. This book was a bit of a letdown, especially since it came from a scholar for whom I have such great respect.

Wade says

This is the best book that I have read on baptism. Because it is written by John Murray, it is not an easy read. It is still readable, but may take some time (and re-reading) if one is not accustomed to reading theological material. Having said that, it is well worth the read. The entire book is thoroughly exegetical; Murray does not randomly grab Bible verses as an exercise in proof-texting, rather he constantly looks at the whole counsel of Scripture to inform every topic upon which he is writing. Murray begins by addressing the meaning and importance of baptism. He clearly shows how John the Baptist's baptism is not to be identified with the baptism that Jesus instituted. Murray shows how baptism is centrally about union with Christ and being baptized into (the phrase "baptized into" is significant) the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Murray also does an excellent job explaining the meaning of the word baptizo (the Greek word for "baptize"). He gives an extremely solid argument proving that the word baptizo does not mean "immerse", as some traditions in recent church history have tried to claim that it means. Murray explains the significance of baptism for the church and shows how the New Testament is the unfolding of the Abrahamic covenant, that all nations are blessed in terms of the promise given to Abraham. Murray gives a sound and biblical defense of infant baptism. Emphasizing the continuities of the two covenants, he shows how the covenant with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14) is unfolded in the New Testament. The leading notion in circumcision is the same as the leading notion in baptism, which is union and communion with the Lord. The sign and seal of the covenant being given to infants had been in place for 2,000 years by the time Christ instituted baptism as the sign and seal of the new covenant; the command to administer the sign to infants is never revoked in the New Testament. Murray goes on to point out that the new covenant is more expansive than the old covenant and therefore it is counterintuitive to expect retraction, unless that retraction is explicitly stated in the New Testament. Furthermore, Murray explains how the new covenant was inaugurated at Pentecost; Peter took up the old covenant language and said, "This is for you and your children." Murray also draws a helpful distinction between paedobaptism and credocommunion, pointing out that all of the notions of the Lord's Supper involve conscious understanding and therefore credocommunion is more consistent with the Passover as well as with all that the Lord's Supper implies. Since baptism is one of only two sacraments in the church, it is helpful and important to have a clear understanding of what that sacrament really means; this book aids very well in that understanding.

Josh says

As expected, Murray is concise and clear. But three stars because I fundamentally disagree with him on the issue of infant baptism, most clearly on the relationship between the Abrahamic covenant and the new covenant. Still, he presents a good summary of the paedobaptist position.

Ryan Watkins says

A great concise defense of reformed paedobaptism. Highly recommended.
