

Relation to Baptism

Faith is needed prior to baptism and confession for sins committed after baptism is often required. Many Old Testament signs are seen as indicating this important role for baptism. It is the death of Christ that opens this testimonial way for us and a great stress is laid upon it.

Many students, when first coming to the Ante-Nicene fathers, may feel that they smack of baptismal regeneration. There is a certain amount of truth in this and yet it is an easy over-statement. In their context, baptism is the seal of life and the proof of the reality of spiritual transaction. I think the total picture of the age must be born in mind, however, before rushing to conclusions. (You will still find in the fathers wide discrepancies on the "how" and the "who" of baptism.)

Cyprian letter 69.

Baptism "washing away" "

*No bogus Christians.
Must have public display.
Can't be wishy-washy.*

(2) Regeneration is accomplished therefore by responding to grace, entering into faith via baptism and identification in the company of the church. Origen rather develops this more completely with an initial salvation built on faith and repentance, and a higher salvation that comes with knowledge, understanding and leads to good works. Such schemes are to be tightly guarded against as they easily lead to a dualistic sort of Christianity which is self-defeating to the average Christian.

(3) The exercise of faith is universally called for...faith in the "God-Man" and obedient trust to what he has given.

b. Selected Readings (Suggested)

- (1) Martyr: Dialogue with Trypho, 39.
- (2) Irenaeus: Against Heresies 4:14.1
5:16.2, 2
5:21.3
3:18.6, etc.
- (3) Tertullian: To the Jews: 13
On Modesty: 22
- (4) Clement of Alexandria: Exhortation to the Heathen: 12:118
- (5) Cyprian: Epistle 103.

c. Observations:

Soteriology:

Selected Readings

Observations:

(1) The character of life in an age of persecution forced a more serious view of the life of a Christian than most of us have had to face. The responsibilities and dangers made a more penetrating situation. There was no room for "easy-believism."