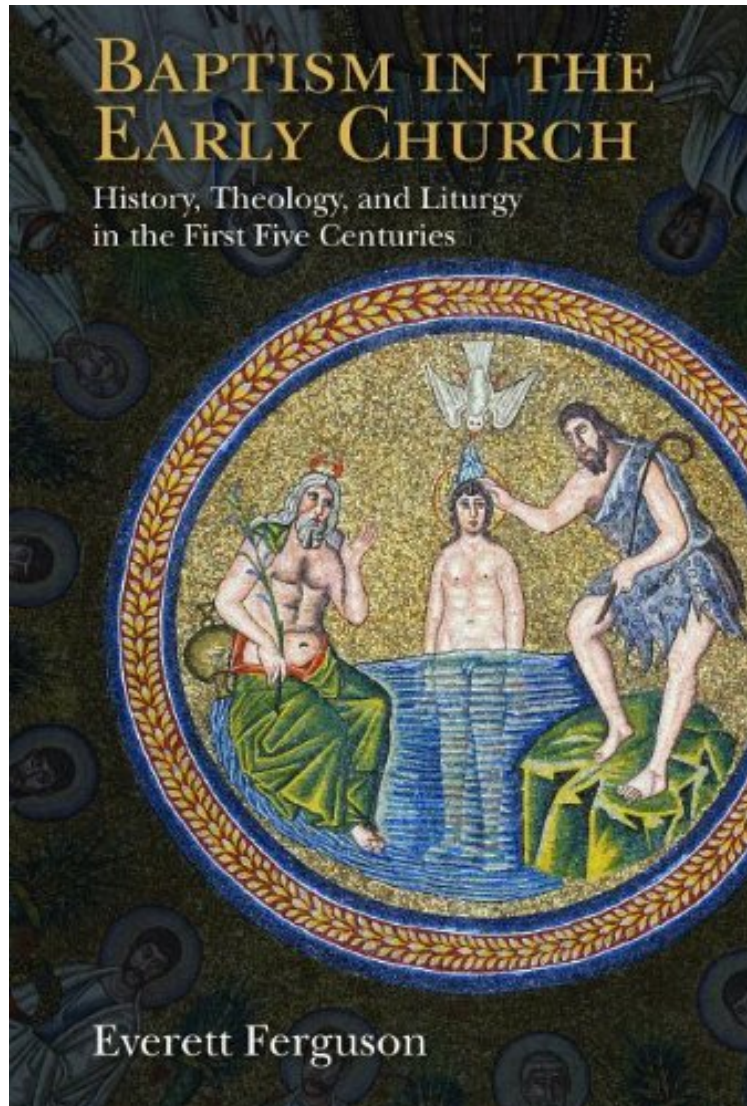


(Read now) Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries

Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries

Everett Ferguson

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Everett Ferguson : Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries:

67 of 69 people found the following review helpful. A Magisterial Study By Quentin D. Stewart From the jacket: "This magisterial study is a comprehensive survey of the doctrine and practice of baptism in the first five centuries of Christian history, arranged geographically within chronological periods. ... The book deals primarily with with the

literary sources, though it also gives attention to depictions of baptism, (primarily of Jesus) in various art forms and to the surviving baptismal fonts. Ferguson's thorough study points to the central importance of baptism in the early church. Many blessings were attributed to baptism, but the two earliest and most consistently mentioned are forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit; faith and repentance were necessary in order to receive these benefits. ... full immersion was the normal practice, and the evidence from art is consistent with this interpretation." This work is massive and detailed and divided into seven parts: Antecedents to Christian baptism, Baptism in the New Testament, Baptism in the second century, Baptism in the third century up until Nicea (325 A.D.), The fourth century, The fifth century, Baptisteries. Ferguson's discussion of Gregory of Nazianzus's famous Orations on baptism circa A.D. 380 support the conclusions of the jacket cover: baptism was often delayed until adolescence or adulthood or later. Gregory urges congregants not to put off baptism and most typically refers to it as "regeneration." The penultimate chapter discusses Augustine of Hippo's baptismal practices and theology. Augustine himself presided as bishop of Hippo in the Basilica of Peace between 411 and 430 A.D. Archaeological finds uncovered the basilica's baptistery revealing a baptismal pool some three feet deep and somewhat broader and wider. The process whereby the catechumens at Hippo were to be baptized on Easter are elaborately detailed by Ferguson based on Augustine's own writings. One question is whether or not the catechumens at Hippo were fully immersed. Augustine does not say in his many comments about the baptismal procedure at Hippo, but Ferguson contends Augustine had full immersion in mind. (Some think the baptismal pool not deep enough for full immersion while others contend Augustine had the catechumens wade into the pool to show humility and then kneel for baptism.) Ferguson argues that by "baptismus/baptizare" Augustine referred to the inner purification by Christ whereas "tinctio/intinguere" referred to the physical act of baptism itself. Augustine even uses the word "submersio" and so presumably practiced full immersion according to Ferguson. Important to note that Augustine did consider catechumens to be Christians before baptism, though they were not full members of the Church Catholic. Infant baptism, although not yet the norm in Christian North Africa, was common enough, especially for emergency baptisms. There are hardly any references to the baptism of healthy infants. The ritual for infants was basically the same as for adults. The infants were exorcized, validating Augustine's view of infants being stained with original sin. Adults would then speak the renunciation [of satan] and the profession of faith. "What infants were not yet able to do through their own faith was done for them by those who love them." Augustine resorted to the faith of others to justify the baptism of infants. In "On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis" Augustine states that baptism absolves infants from the punishment of original sin, "so it is right and proper to baptize them." Infants were then immersed in the same way as adults and then received an anointing (chrismation) and a laying on of hands (consignation). Afterwards they participated in the baptismal eucharist, receiving both the bread and the wine. Sermon 174 states "infants are members of Christ and receive the sacraments, including sharing in His table." And so, with Gregory in the East and Augustine in the West - during the Pelagian controversy - infant baptism became the norm for the early church some time in the fifth century. An extremely detailed and invaluable resource, though clearly not without biases given that many would argue infant baptism was normative at a much earlier time in the Church's history. Biases notwithstanding Ferguson's assertions are well documented and he is conversant with the secondary literature. 8 of 8 people found the following review helpful. **Everything But the Baptismal Font** By James McDevitt First, as a Kindle owner, this book has an active table of contents, illustrations (at the end of chapter 3), is fully indexed, and uses greek characters throughout. As far as the content is concerned, it includes everything you ever wanted to know about baptism. Baptism is not only compared from its use in the East and the West but is also compared and contrasted to Jewish washings and even washings in other ancient religions. Issues include full immersion vs partial immersion or sprinkling, infant vs adult immersions, deathbed baptisms, the issue over who should administer the baptism, male vs female baptism (with the issue of nudity being the prime motive here), as well as debate on rebaptism (especially if a Christian came from a heretical form of Christianity). Not only the writings are looked at but also Christian art, archaeological findings of baptismal fonts, and even inscriptions on tombs and burial places. Even an in-depth word study is supplied showing how the word Baptismo is used throughout many Greek sources (both Christian and secular). I sincerely doubt that a person could find another book that has as much detail. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. **Kindle Edition Incomplete** By Owen Woodward A quick note about the Kindle edition. It does not contain the pictures which are referenced in the text. This is very unfortunate for a book whose thesis is dependent on more than just textual evidence. In addition there are foot notes referenced in the text that are not linked to the footnotes at the end. Most of these appear to be references to Scripture, which shouldn't be too difficult to look up. I will need to purchase a hard copy for the pictures.

This magisterial volume is a comprehensive survey of the doctrine and practice of baptism in the first five centuries of Christian history, arranged geographically within chronological periods. Baptism in the Early Church covers the antecedents to Christian baptism and traces the history of Christian doctrine and practice from the New Testament through the writings of the church fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries. The book deals primarily with the literary sources, though it also gives attention to depictions of baptism (primarily of Jesus) in various art forms and to the surviving baptismal fonts. Ferguson's thorough study points to the central importance of baptism in the early church.

Many blessings were attributed to baptism, but the two earliest and most consistently mentioned are forgiveness of sins and the reception of the Holy Spirit; faith and repentance were necessary in order to receive these benefits. Jewish immersion rites, the practice of John the Baptist, the meaning of the words used for baptism, the literary descriptions, and the material remains argue that full immersion was the normal practice, and the evidence from art is consistent with this interpretation. Containing nearly everything currently known about the early Christian ritual of baptism, with extensive citations to the primary and secondary literature, Ferguson's *Baptism in the Early Church* is destined to be a standard reference work.

About the Author Everett Ferguson is professor emeritus of Bible and distinguished scholar-in-residence at Abilene Christian University, Abilene, Texas. Among his books are *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*, now in its third edition, and *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today* (both Eerdmans).