Understanding Paedobaptism In Light Of African Theological Context.

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Abstract

The study had a purpose of understanding paedobaptism in light of African theological context. The study is theoretically informed by inculturation theory that is well propounded by Mbiti (1969) and Bediako (1995). The researcher used qualitative methods of data presentation, descriptive and analytical research. Random and cluster selection design was used to sample hundred women of different age groups. He also targeted 50 men of the age between 30-60 years. The study also targeted 50 clergy of the two genders. Extensive reading of relevant literature was done to investigate efficacy of infant baptism. Interview and questionnaire was the method of data collection used in the study, prominent Church leaders and theologians were interviewed. The researcher then examined all data obtained from questionnaires and interview guides. It was coded appropriately and organised for analysis. Various correction tests were run using the SPSS (statistical packages for social sciences). The data was converted into mean, frequencies and percentages. This was used to generate tables and data. The study found out that all the clergy understood the real meaning of baptism as an act of strengthening faith, giving assurance and giving a title. A big percentage of the laity referred baptism as a means of attaining full membership into the church and just acquiring a name. The study recommended that the church needs to educate her members on the meaning of baptism, which is not only having a name and being a member of the church but for a holistic growth of the body of Christ.

Key Terms: paedobaptism, African theological context, inculturation theory.

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Introduction

In considering paedobaptism (infant) baptism in African theological perspective, the study acknowledges the contextual nature of Christian theology. Considering that African theology is kerygmatically universal but theologically provincial (Gathogo, 2015), it is significant that we assess paedobaptism from our respective situations and contexts. Further, Mugambi offers a classic definition of theology as the “systematic articulation of human response to revelation within a particular situation and context” Mugambi (1995: 19). Considering this, Kurewa (1975:36) characterizes African religious philosophy as “the investigation that looks to think about and express the Christian confidence in African idea structures and maxims as it is knowledgeable about African Christian people group and consistently in exchange with the remainder of the Christian world.” In this study, the researcher builds his theological argument by theologizing some observable practice in his context of the See of Embu, which indeed enriches the study as a contemporary theological work.

In this study, the phrase “African theology” will be used to refer to that theological reflection and expression by African Christians that arises out of the philosophy of the African people and speaks to their relevant needs. The study considers the meanings of “African theology” and “African Christian theology” as congruent. As Gitau describes:

African Christian theology [read African theology] should therefore be considered as a theology of selfhood. This position is grounded on two grounds. Firstly, it is in the recognition of the changed status of much of Africa, from colonial to the post-colonial era, and secondly, as a symbol of the desire of the church, in Africa to be in a position to present Christ

as one who knows and understands the hopes, fears and aspirations of Africans (Gitau, 2000:142).

There has been contestations regarding the efficacy of either paedobaptism or credo baptism continues to date. Considering that the two theo-doctrinal viewpoints have the potential to tear down the church right in the middle, the researcher realised that it is incumbent upon me to navigate this troubled waters purposely to bridge in the gap therein. In particular, I encountered the following questions: is paedobaptism superior to credo baptism or vice versa? Does Christ’s prayer that “all of them may be one” (John 17:21) have any theo-doctrinal relevance to this treatise? Should children be welcomed to the rite of baptism? Which is Jesus’ baptism: credo or paedobaptism? Such questions have dominated baptismal discourses for a long time, particularly in the Anglican See of Embu, and beyond the ecclesiastical boundaries.

Certainly, baptism is an initiation rite, which predates Christianity and has been practiced by Christians throughout the centuries, particularly after the 16th Century reformation. Dodged by controversies particularly with regard to paedobaptism and credo baptisms, the need to focus on it has become critically significant. Indeed, the post-colonial era of reconstruction, a phenomenon where we rewrite our histories, theologies and revise all forms of our survival in order to genuinely move forward, drives the motive of this research. Indeed, the need to seek to reconstruct our Biblical hermeneutics, theology and historiography is necessary for a society that is in dire need of theo-doctrinal direction and cannot be gainsaid. Certainly, there is need to revise the traditional understanding of credo or paedobaptisms in order to make it at par or in tandem with the vision and mission of the modern church, namely, to serve Christ with all faithfulness possible.

In Embu Diocese the children of single parents, non-communicants and of parents whose holy matrimony were not conducted in the church are not baptised. However, parents and guardians who accept to undergo the prescribed church rules and regulations normally have their children permitted for baptism. In spite of this, not many parents and guardians are ready to go for the catechism classes. This prompts one to pose the same question that Jesus' Disciples asked in the Gospel of Saint Mark chapter nine: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind?" In other words, the same question applies in the case of the single parents, non-communicants and those whose holy matrimony were not conducted in the church. Similarly, guardians to the orphans have found themselves sailing in the same boat.

In view of this contestation, the study has endeavoured to show that the cry of the affected children sounds the loudest. It is like the children are deprived of their rights in the church where they are expected to have solace. This eludes a scenario similar to when the parents brought little children to Jesus in their bid to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked those who were bringing them.

In any case, when Jesus saw it, he was moved with irateness, and said to them: "Permit the children to come to me! Try not to prohibit them, for the Realm of God has a place with, for example, these." (Mark 10:14). As a result, the study shows that there is need to review and inculturate the manner, the meaning and the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism in the ACK-Embu Diocese, in order to sort out the confusion regarding the sacrament of baptism, so that it may rhyme with the cultural naming of Aembu community where children were all accepted as "full" members of the community. This in turn agrees with John Mbiti's aphorism, that: 'I am because we are and since we are therefore I am' (Mbiti 1969:108). This communalistic approach builds the case for reassessing the nature of contestation regarding the sacrament of baptism for children in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The meaning of Baptism: Credo versus Paedo

In the expressions of Matt Slick, the President and Founder of the Christian Rational theology and Exploration Service, credobaptism is the act of absolving just the individuals who can make a calling of confidence (see <https://carm.org/matt-slick>). The word philosophy comes from the Latin for "statement of faith." Credobaptism is additionally called Adherent's Submersion.

Credo Baptists maintain that it is improper to baptize infants (paedobaptism) since there is, in their view, no account in Scripture where infants are baptized. Certainly, a thorough biblical exegesis is needed to counter such extremist positions. Again, from a casual look in the Kenyan context and beyond, credo Baptists also tend to practice baptism by immersion.

Conversely, Paedobaptism (pedobaptism) is the practice of baptizing infants. The Greek word *pais* means "child" (Grenz, 2000: 528). There are contrasts of convictions among places of worship that training paedobaptism on what befalls the child when it's sanctified through water. The Roman Catholic Church encourages that immersion eliminates sin and emphatically asks guardians to purify through water the newly born children.

There are improved gatherings, for example, the Presbyterian Church in America which practice baby absolution however not at all like the Roman Catholic Church don't train that such sanctification saves the kid. All things being equal, it encourages that newborn child sanctification is a pledge sign and doesn't save - simply equivalent to Old Testament circumcision was a covenantal sign that didn't save (Jurgens, 1970:209). The Lutheran Chapels, similar to the Roman Catholic Church, practice baby submersion and keep up that such sanctification saves the young. Without a critical or exegetical study of both the Old and the New Testament, one can easily argue that there is no explicit command in the Bible to baptize infants.

In any case, some hold that it is prefigured in the Old Testament circumcision of babies by which God directed them to be gone into the Abrahamic pledge. This Abrahamic contract talked about in Genesis 12:3 was cited by Paul in Galatians 4:8 similar to the gospel. Subsequently, some hold that the Abrahamic Pledge which included newborn children is still basically (see Grenz 2000: 528). Hence, newborn children are supposed to be deserving of such covenantal interest in the present-day (Col. 2:11-12 relates circumcision and absolution which currently incorporates the two guys and females). Additionally, as the Old Testament instructed that whole families were circumcised (females clearly prohibited) as were whole families submersed in the New Testament. For instance, this can be seen from New Testament verses such as:

- Acts 16:15 “And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, 'If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.' And she prevailed upon us.”
- Acts 18:8, “And Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord with his entire household and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.”
- 1 Cor. 1:16, “Now I did baptize also the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized any other” (Jurgens, 1970).

In view of their comprehension of New Testament entries, for example, Colossians 2:11–12, paedobaptists accept that baby absolution is the New Confirmation partner to circumcision. In the Old Testament, all male believers to Judaism, male babies brought into the world to Jewish guardians, and male workers were circumcised as service of commencement into the Jewish people group. Paedobaptists accept that sanctification has supplanted Old Testament circumcision and is the strict function of commencement into the Christian people group. During the archaic and Transformation periods, baby absolution was viewed as an approach to join new-conceived children into the common local area just as

drafting them into the Christian confidence (Jurgens, 1970).

Christian denominations that oppose infant baptism would include the Baptists, Churches of Christ, and Pentecostal groups. They would deny infant baptism by saying that belief must precede baptism and that infants cannot believe. Curiously, cultic and sectarian “Christian groups” such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, and the Christadelphians, are a non-Trinitarian, millennial Christian group whose aim is to get as close as possible to the faith and practice of the early Christian church, also deny infant baptism. Clearly, those who are against paedobaptism go against the early church fathers, in church history, who taught that infant baptism is proper. In particular, Origen states that the practice of baptising infants is of apostolic origin (Jurgens, 1970: 209).

Having defined paedo baptism, it is imperative to define baptism in general, to which we now turn. According to the Catholic Encyclopaedia Baptism-Etymology and definition; The Greek word baptizo Signifies “to plunge, plunge, drench” something in water. This is the regularly perceived and standard importance of the term in old Greek writing both inside and outside of the Good book (Grudem, 1994: 967). Further, there are entries that discuss “washing” or washing (in the Septuagint, Judith 12:7 for instance, and in the New Testament, Mark 7:4) would doubtlessly include covering one’s body (or hands, in Mark 7:4) totally with water.

Consequently, if any New Testament author had wanted to indicate that people were sprinkled with water a perfectly good Greek word meaning “to sprinkle” was available: *rhantizo* is used in this sense in Heb. 9:13, 19, 21, 10:22. Secondly, the sense “Immerse” is appropriate and probably required for the word in several New Testament passages.

In Mk. 1:5, individuals were immersed by John in the river Jordan “(the Greek content has an,” in and not “adjacent to” or “by” or close to the stream. Imprint likewise reveals to us that when Jesus had been submersed “he

came up out of the water” (Mk. 1:10). The Greek content indicates that he came “out of” (ek) the water, not that he left away from it (this would be communicated by Greek. apo).

Thirdly, the symbolism of union with Christ in his death, burial and resurrection seems to require baptism by immersion, as Paul says in (Rom. 6:3-4; (Col 2:12). Immersion along these lines unmistakably pictures demise to one's old lifestyle and ascending to another sort of life in Christ. Be that as it may, absolution by sprinkling or pouring just misses this imagery (Grudem, 1994:968).

This shows the confusion and misunderstanding of the real meaning of baptism. Hence, the infant/children of single-parents, non-communicants and those not married in church are not baptized in the ACK-Embu Diocese. Further washing, death and resurrection with Christ are symbolized in baptism, but Romans 6:1-11 and Colossians 2:11-12 places a clear emphasis on dying and rising with Christ.

In the event that passing and revival with Christ are represented exclusively by submersion, not in the least by sprinkling or pouring, what at that point is the positive significance of immersion? The astounding certainties of going through the waters of Judgment securely, of biting the dust and ascending with Christ, and having our wrongdoings washed away, are facts of groundbreaking and unceasing extent and should be an event for giving incredible brilliance and recognition to God. On the off chance that holy places would show these certainties all the more obviously, immersions would be the event of significantly more gift in the congregation.

Baptism is one of the two ceremonials that Jesus commanded his church to perform. Notwithstanding, there is conflict among Protestants considerably over the overall term that ought to be applied to them. Since the Roman Catholic Church calls these two services “holy observances”, and in light of the fact that the Catholic church instructs that these ceremonies in themselves

really passes on elegance to individuals without requiring confidence from the people taking part in them.

On the other hand, some Protestants (especially Baptists) have refused to refer to baptism and the Lord supper as “sacraments”. They have preferred the word ordinances instead, because baptism and the Lord’s Supper were “ordained” by Christ (Grudem, 1994:966). Different protestants like those in the Anglican, Lutheran and improved practices, have been willing to utilize the word.

“Sacrament” to refer to baptism and the Lord’s Supper, without thereby endorsing the Roman Catholic position. “Sacraments” could be used interchangeably since they are synonymous in meaning. This indicates that sacraments have been a bone of contention from long time ago to date and especially the meaning of baptism in the ACK-Embu Diocese. Hence, people like.

Susan Wood compares and contrasts Lutheran and reformed understanding of baptism with Tridentine theology and Vatican 11 approaches (Wood, 2009:218). Wood makes her significant point that a full philosophy of absolution must be built from an eschatological skyline.

She further asserts that difficulties in our ecumenical dialogues arise from divergent meaning of sacrament of baptism. A handy start outlines several official Roman Catholic and Protestant definitions of sacrament. She shows ways in which catechumenal process support seeing baptism as a transformative process rather than single event. She described Lutheran and reformed patterns of initiation consistently giving greater attention to Calvinist based reform and almost none to Anglican patterns (Wood, 2009:218). In line with Woods’ observations, a participant observer will easily notice that the Anglican See of Embu has not fully come to a common ground on whether or not to baptize the children of single parents, non-communicants and parents whose holy matrimonyes are not yet solemnized in the church.

In line with Wood's observations above, one can easily notice that such contentions weaken our ecumenical appeal particularly when we consider the contestations that have played out with regard to paedo baptism. Indeed, the ACK-Embu Diocese takes the sacrament of baptism as an ecclesiastical rule without necessarily moving the theology of paedo versus credo baptism to catechumenical levels. Clearly, exhaustive and in-depth theology of baptism (both credo and paedo baptisms) is a necessity and can indeed be reconstructed from an eschatological horizon (Wood, 2009:218). In deconstructing the current theo-doctrinal trajectories, a reconstructed way of viewing paedo baptism will most likely emerge thereby giving hope to children of the single parents, non-communicants and even to those who may not have solemnized their holy matrimony from an ecclesiastical stand point.

Undoubtedly, the needs of children cannot be fully provided for without a reorientation of national development policies. In order to do this, African government must be ready to adopt culture-relevant approaches and be more willing to listen to their population (Nsamenang, 1992; 164). On the same, the internet encyclopaedia of philosophy states that the doctrine of sacrament follows Christology, "for the sacraments has efficacy from the incarnate word Himself" (Bradley 2009), however, Thomas Aquinas contradicts the Franciscans view that the sacraments are mere symbols whose efficacy God accomplished with a directly creative act in the soul. This means that "To deny infant, baptism is to deprive them of a privilege and benefit that is rightfully theirs the sign of belonging to the community of God's people, "covenant community" (Grudem, 1994:985). This has helped us in attempting to understand the need for affirming paedo baptism, hence baptism should not be denied to infants since it originated from above backgrounds that form part of the rich history of Christianity.

In studying paedo baptism, it is critical to appreciate that African Instituted churches (formerly called African Independent Churches) have unique ways of baptizing people. Some combine credo and paedo baptism, others

baptize by immersion and is restricted for adults only, others baptize by blessing with oil (Gathogo, 2014). All these diversities are geared towards enriching the body of Christ hence Embu Anglican Diocese can borrow a leaf from creative works of AICs particularly if their modes of baptisms are compatible with the God of Christendom. In turn, an African initiated church is a Christian church independently started in Africa by Africans and not by missionaries from other continents for that matter.

The most seasoned of these is the Tewahedo (Ethiopian Orthodox Church) which dates from the fourth century, and was one of the principal Christian temples on the planet (Marcus 1994). AICs are classed as follows: Ethiopian churches, Zionist churches, Messianic churches, apostolic churches and Aladura Pentecostal churches. For example, Aladura chapels which started in Nigeria and incorporate Christ Missional Church, Cherubim and Seraphim, Divine Church of Christ and Church of the Ruler (Aladura) accept the office of petition and inside and out impacts of the immersion of the Heavenly Spirit. While their baptismal methodologies differ from one AIC to another, they too have lessons that can inform this study on the real meaning of baptism and the contestations regarding this all important Christian sacrament.

Old Testament Concept of Baptism/Water Rituals

Certainly, the Church is beholden or indebted to Judaism for its main structures such as Messiah, Scripture, Canon, Liturgy, Altar, Pulpit, Church Offices, Songs, Offerings, the Lord's Supper, as well as the baptism itself. As Dr. Merrill Tenney, the editor of the Zondervan Encyclopaedia of the Bible says, "Baptism as a rite of immersion was not begun by Christians but was taken by them from Jewish and pagan forms ..." (Brownson, 2007: 10). From the Old Testament background baptism is derived from the Jewish *Mikveh*. In turn, the term *mikveh* in Hebrew literally means, any gathering of waters. It is specifically used in Jewish law for the waters or bath for the ritual immersion. To this end, the building of the *mikveh* was so important in ancient times; for it was said

to take precedence over the construction of a synagogue (Allen, 2010).

Further, immersion was so important that it took place before the High Priest conducted the service on the Day of Atonement (Brownson, 2007). This was done before the regular Priests participated in the Temple service; and before each person entered the Temple complex; and even a scribe wrote the name of God. It was also done in several other occasions. Interestingly, the Mishnah (the first major written redaction of the Jewish oral traditions also known as Oral Torah) attributes to Ezra a decree that each male should immerse himself before praying or studying. Overall, several Jewish groups and sects observed ritual immersion on daily basis as a measure of reassuring their readiness for the coming of the Messiah. One of these Jewish groups is *Hemerobaptists*, which means “daily bathers” in Greek language (Brownson, 2007). Additionally, the Essenes and others called *toveleishaharit*, meaning “dawn bathers” were regular in these baptism rituals. Further, Genesis 1 verse 10 brings out the third day of creation where the source of the word mikveh appears for the first time in Old Testament theology. It says, “... to the gathering (mikveh) of waters, He called seas ...” From this, it is clear that the ocean is still a legitimate *mikveh* (Allen, 2010).

Baptism during the Inter-testamental Period

On the other hand, it can be noted that the baptism of the converts to the biblical faith is not found in the Old Testament; rather, it was a practice that developed in the inter-testamental period (Brownson, 2007). Some scholars call it Jewish proselyte baptism. In this case, Gentiles who wished to convert to the biblical faith were required by Jews to be ritually baptized. It is during this period (inter-testamental) that the proliferation of *mitzvahs* (Jewish baptisteries) in Judea. In view of this, Gentiles were seen to be very dirty in their sins hence they had to be cleansed before they could join God’s covenant community. And in turn, this idea of “covenant community” compares well with African cultural practice of circumcision where a non-circumcised person was seen as ritually unclean, non-partaker of communal life,

and indeed, as a person who was not a full member of the community (Kenyatta, 1938).

In turn, this form of baptism is the background of John’s baptism (Allen, 2010). The difference is, John was calling the Jews themselves to be baptized or be cleansed. Or was it a call for a theological revival? In the synoptic, John is seen as downplaying the pride of Jews, pointing to the fact that they were no better than the Gentiles. They were equally sinful and both in need of true faith and repentance in equal measure. The implication of John’s view of inclusive baptism is that God’s wrath (and/or blessings and curses) falls on both Jews and Gentiles. The same argument, on inclusivity, can be extended further into the 21st century Africa as we consider the contestations regarding paedobaptism.

There is solid proof that during the inter testamental period and into the primary century, in any event some portion of the Jews believed that circumcision was needed for the proselyte to Judaism (See, for instance, Schiffman in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition Volume 2* (Philadelphia: Stronghold, 1981), 115-156, particularly 125-127. For the Jew, circumcision was one of a modest bunch of significant limit markers, which put them aside from the remainder of the world. For the Gentile, circumcision was an abnormal mutilation of the tissue. Greco-Roman journalists who remark on Judaism as a rule scorn the training. Conjugal, for instance, appears to track down a lot of (wicked) humor in the Jewish practice (Epigrams 7.35.3-4; 7, 82, 11.94).

Overall, circumcision was a central point in Jewish personality. While the act of circumcision itself isn’t remarkable to the Jews in the Antiquated world, albeit a portion of the practices dependent on the Jewish Book of scriptures are explicitly Jewish. Circumcision is offered as a hint of the Contract of Abraham in Beginning 17, yet the actual custom didn’t present “otherworldly gift” as an indication of the agreement. Hence the prophets told individuals that they required a “circumcised heart – plainly a figurative utilization of the possibility of circumcision (Deut. 10:16, 30:6; Jer 4:4; Ezek 44:7, 9).

New Testament Concept of Baptism

In the New Testament, there were many ritual immersion baths (*mikyaot*) on the Temple Mount. Josephus tells us that even during the years of war (CE 66-73); the laws of ritual immersion were strictly adhered to (Brownson, 2007). Clearly, many of the early Church's daily activities were centred on the Temple, as the New Testament shows (Allen, 2010). In turn, the Temple itself contained immersion baths in various places for the priest to use. In particular, the High Priest had special immersion pools in the Temple, two of which are mentioned in the Mishnah (Oral Torah). One of them was in the Water Gate in the south of the court; and another was on the roof of the Parva Chamber (Brownson, 2007). An additional place for immersion was on the Mount Olives. It was connected with the burning of the red heifer. There was a special ramp that led to the *mikveh* on the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount, which was built as an arched way over another arched way so as to avoid uncleanness from the graves in certain valleys. Of interest to note is that recent archaeological excavations have found 48 different *mikyaot* near the Monumental Staircase leading into the Temple Complex (Allen, 2010).

Briefly, immersion rituals were common even in the early New Testament times as a measure of cleansing and as continuity from other Jewish heritage that were prevalent. This again drives us to the question, why then are there theological contestations regarding paedobaptism even in the 21st century? Can a retrieval of such Old and early New Testament backgrounds that were rooted in Jewish heritage help us in retracing where the rain began to beat us theologically? Is not the fact that the theology of baptism rooted in Jewish history not helpful in unveiling our present concerns? Significant is the way that there are six plunging requests of ceremonial showers in the Mishnah (Oral Laws of how to achieve the composed Law). The most elevated request is that of a spring or streaming waterway. Specifically, we see Jesus understanding and satisfying this request in Matthew 3:16 as he comes to be purified through water in the Jordan river.

In other words, he fulfilled all righteousness, which is the highest order (Brownson, 2007). This Living Water Order is illustrated in the forgiving of sins (John 4:10-11). Equally, there are also six basic restrictions on the water used in the *mikveh*. This included rules such as: a). the *mikveh* cannot contain any other liquid apart from water; b). the water has to be either built into the ground or be an integral part of a building attached to the ground; c). the *mikveh* cannot be flowing except for a natural spring, river, and/or ocean; d). the water cannot be manually drawn; e). the water cannot be channelled to the *mikveh* by anything unclean; f). the *mikveh* must contain at least 40 sa'ah or approximately 200 gallons of water. Clearly, if there were such prescriptions then, how does not it follow automatically that to our modern versions of baptism, and especially paedobaptism which is the main concern for this study? Have we ignored the clearly cut out ritual prescriptions regarding paedobaptism hence theological contestations on the same? Such concerns inform this study (Allen, 2010).

Concisely, the Jewish background of Christian baptism shows that it is critically significant for comparative reasons; and indeed in addressing the rituals surrounding baptism. Characteristically, the convert could repent and have a part in the life to come without it. Clearly, the proselyte could apologize and have a section in the life to come without it, yet the accentuation is by all accounts highlighting the taking on of another "devotee" status outlined as "another birth" by submersion. In any pledge with the Master the three things of God's Assertion, the blood, and a token are consistently present (Genesis 17:11). Jesus was consistently careful to have three observers in all that He did (1 John 5:7-8). In the Old Testament circumcision was viewed as the badge of God's contract, and in the New Confirmation we see a similar phrasing concerning immersion as it is alluded to as "circumcision made without hands" (Colossians 2:11-12). Whatever strict division, all adherents ought to concur that drenching has its underlying foundations in the Jewish *mikveh* of Jesus' day, and it is of most

extreme significance for every one of us to satisfy this upright deed.

Early Church Practice of Paedo-Baptism

The issue of sanctification is one that has upset Protestants for quite a long time. As we investigate the historical backdrop of the congregation, the issue of newborn child sanctification has not been the issue as it has been in ongoing hundreds of years. As the congregation was in an evangelistic mode in the initial three centuries, we discover clear articulations of the reality of grown-up sanctification upon change (Brownson, 2007). There was additionally the idea that absolution washed away all pre-baptismal sins. Henceforth there emerged the act of delaying absolution until one's deathbed all together not to submit post-baptismal sins, which would need to be managed through retribution (Allen, 2010).

As the congregation vanquished the agnostic world we consider baby to be as emerging as a widespread practice. Partially this has all the earmarks of being founded on the way that even in the antiquated church there was the idea that sanctification was the commencement ceremony into the local area of confidence, and newborn children naturally introduced to that local area so are submersed (Brownson, 2007). A subsequent factor seems to have been the ascent of the comprehension of unique sin and the conviction that immersion washed away the stain of unique sin. Third, the mandates early were perceived as really passing on elegance and achieving something profoundly. As right on time as CE 400, St. Augustine bids to the widespread act of baby sanctification as confirmation that the congregation saw babies brought into the world with the stain of unique sin (Allen, 2010). We discover express notice of newborn child absolution as ahead of schedule as Tertullian around CE 220 (Allen, 2010). Tertullian refers to the training related to supports who might help in the young's otherworldly preparing.

It would be assumed that this is the origin of the practice of godparents. Concisely, Paedobaptism, also called

covenant baptism, and/or household baptism is the most common form of baptism practiced in Christianity throughout its history, right from the early church (Brownson, 2007). As the name indicates, it is baptism for a person while an infant or child, commonly performed within the first two years of life. In Protestant traditions of paedobaptism, since such a baptism does not require the active participation of the baptized (as with a 'believer's baptism'), the intent of the act and the liturgies of the worship services surrounding it are quite different from adult or believer's baptism.

While a devotee's immersion is a wilful demonstration of the purified through water, baby absolution is viewed as an emblematic just as strange demonstration of God by which a case is put upon the kid's life by God and the Congregation. Such a case does not guarantee the salvation of the immersed, as accepted inside the Roman Catholic Church, but instead follows the Scriptural practice of God calling individuals to himself and that the expectation of what is to come isn't found inside the capacities or viability of the submersed however inside God himself (Brownson, 2007). Hence, the opportunity that the Congregation needs to immerse youngsters depends on the premise that God's motivations will be refined in spite of the delicacy of the absolved Church.

This freedom is confirmed within Reformed theology as a continuance of the sacrament of circumcision under the Abrahamic covenant. In many Protestant traditions, which practice paedobaptism, particularly reformed, a young adult will re-iterate the commitment of baptism through what is commonly called "confirmation" (Brownson, 2007). As a culmination of church classes, and perhaps a more personal mentoring as well, the young adult who has learned the rudiments of discipleship and his or her relationship to God and his people will confirm this understanding and commitment to it as a basis of his or her life.

Infant Baptism in the Church of Reformation

The church of the reformation appreciated paedobaptism, especially those who were born to

believing parents. Changed Christians do so this based on the congruity from the old contract among God and Israel and the new pledge with the congregation (Brownson, 2007). They additionally see God's saving reason in the new agreement as having to do with families just as people. Since Changed Christians accept absolution should be embraced by confidence to have any advantage, they perceive that confidence may come further down the road as opposed to continuing submersion (Allen, 2010). Newborn children may likewise be said to have a seed of confidence which will work out as expected later, or absolution might be managed dependent on a guarantee of confidence offered by their backers, which will be kept at a later age.

Reformers held that the ritual of baptism via immersion is not necessary for baptism to be properly performed, but that pouring or sprinkling is acceptable (Brownson, 2007). Sprinkling is said to represent the sprinkling of the blood of Christ for the evacuation of the blame of transgression. Just appointed clergymen are allowed to manage immersion in Improved places of worship, in opposition to the recompense for crisis sanctification by birthing assistants in Roman Catholic temples, however submersions performed by non-pastors are for the most part thought to be substantial. Improved holy places, while dismissing the baptismal functions of the Roman Catholic Church (like the utilization of chrism, salt, and insufflations). Accept the validity of baptisms performed with them on the basis that the substance of baptism remains (Allen, 2010). They don't rebaptize somebody who has been submersed utilizing these functions since immersion is never to be rehashed.

Baptism as the Fulfilment of Circumcision

Critically important is that baptism can also be seen as the fulfilment of circumcision. From this understanding, the New Testament sacrament of the Lord's Supper can be seen as the fulfilment of an Old Testament ceremony- the Passover. Surely, the Lord's Dinner is regularly established during the Passover custom and hence Passover gives significance and setting to the act of the Master's Dinner. All Christians all around concur this on.

This drives us to consider the Old Testament foundation to submersion. What function anticipates the act of immersion? The normal response to that inquiry is circumcision. The two services are equal in their religious significance. That is:

1. *Entry Rites:* As was noted above, both were required of new converts to the faith. They are both entry rites into the faith signifying the person had been accepted into their new faith.
2. *Social Identity Markers:* They both were marks of belonging to the covenant people of God, separating the believer from the world, marking them out as members of the church.
3. *Being Made Clean:* They both represented making the new convert clean, their old life of moral filth having been washed away.
4. *Symbols of Justification by Faith:* They both were outward signs of inward faith, of being justified by faith.
5. *Renunciation of the Old Life:* Both represented the believer putting away the old sinful nature in order to live in new obedience to God (Brownson, 2007, Allen, 2010).

In addition to the above parallels, St Paul directly links the two ceremonies in meaning:

In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self-ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ, having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through your faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins (Colossians 2:11-13).

In view of the ongoing, it is easy to deduce that the early church meditated on how the two practices were alike and/or different; and indeed how they shed interpretive light on each other. This now helps us to understand the early church practice of baptism. The Anglican See of

Embu does not offer specific solutions to stop the alarming and increasing number of unbaptized infants (children) who are a burden not only to their parents but also to the whole Community. For example, the Apostle Paul had taken risk of giving guidance on matters of faith, Marriage, Baptism and even Circumcision. In Galatians 3:27 Paul says, “As many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ”.

According to Wayne Grudem, Paul here assumes that baptism is the outward sign of inward regeneration, further; Grudem contends that the New Testament creators composed like they unmistakably accepted that every individual who was submersed had additionally actually confided in Christ and experienced salvation (Grudem, 1994:971).

Here the New Testament says that all of those who have been baptized have been baptized with him, and have put on Christ. On the same Jomo Kenyatta says that, the initiates promise by the oath that from this day onwards they will in every aspect deport themselves like adults and take responsibilities in the welfare of the Community, and that they will not lag behind whenever called upon to perform any service or duty in the protection and advancement of the tribe as a whole. They are made to promise never to reveal the tribal secrets, even to a member of the tribe who has not yet been initiated. When the bathing is completed, all the initiates are lined up following their order of adoption (Kenyatta, 2004, 141-144).

This rhymes with the Churches’ view that the baptized person is incorporated, by the baptismal character into the mystical body of Christ, however, every validly baptized person, even one baptized outside the church becomes a member of the one holy catholic and apostolic church. This could mean that all baptism done by every generation including the ACK-Embu Diocese is valid, provided it is carried out in the right way that is by use of water and the pronouncing of the names of the trinity. On the same, Grudem (1986:30) observes that Baptism is understood in three ways, that is: as the

outward sacrament, where in the washing with water, represents the cleansing of the souls (Luke 7:29; Acts 18:25; 1Peter 3.21). This means that baptism is very significant for having a ritual washing like initiation in the Old Testament. Secondly, Grudem interprets baptism as an inward spiritual washing signified by the outward sign (Mathew 3:11). Thirdly, he interprets it as the suffering of Christ (Mathew 20:22; Luke 20:50). This indicates death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the base of Christianity and should be taken as the core meaning of baptism.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Understanding Baptism in African Theological Context

As noted in our hypothesis, paedobaptism can best be understood by first addressing the place and importance of children in African context. In some African communities, a boy child is circumcised while still young, even after birth, just as the Jewish children were circumcised during their eighth day (Luke 1). Indeed, some African communities circumcise the boy child at around ten years while the Kikuyu, Meru, Mbeere and Embu communities circumcise their boy-children at around 14 years (Kenyatta, 1938; Mbiti, 1969). This is meant to bring in meaning, membership and indeed a sense of entitlement to the well-being of the community. In other words, a circumcised person partakes the rituals, aspirations, and indeed builds on the heritage of the community thereby gaining full identity hence his communal role is clearly stamped.

In general, male circumcision amongst Bantu speakers defined a change in status before, during, and after the coming of the European civilization in the 19th Century. This involves a clear break between a childlike status, elevation to warrior status and generally toughening or hardening of boys to men (Kenyatta, 1938; Mbiti, 1969). In turn, the model of viewing baptism from the perspective of African forms of circumcision implies that the tendency through Bantu-speaking areas in prehistory was for more and more groups to view it as a climactic moment that cannot be abandoned easily irrespective of any cultural encounter thereof. Presumably this is

accelerating, especially amongst the fringes of the non-circumcising areas, as male circumcision is now sometimes simply emblematic or traditional, although still signifying adult status and commonly lacks the wider social significance it once had.

In the previous centuries prior to the 21st Century, the circumcision of the girl child was also practiced. It has since then been abandoned as the African society adopts alternative rituals. Putting it differently, baptismal rites in the communal African society cannot be seen as complete until it incorporates children who are seen as not just the future but also the cementers of our socio-marital relationships. As will be demonstrated in the next sub-section, children are the reason for not only our present joys but also of our future hopes. If the Christian ritual of baptism excludes them from the schema of baptism, then the significance and meaning of baptism is lost. Certainly, an African society is composed of the living, the dead, the children, and the yet to be born (Kenyatta, 1938; Mbiti, 1969). It is for that reason that exclusion of children from baptismal rituals lacks meaning as it brings out the connotation that the society of God is being theologically fragmented and divided.

In attempting to understand paedobaptism in light of the African context, it is critically important to recall that the Protestant reformers of the 16th Century CE stressed the positive benefits of baptism for the infant. In the words of the Puritans' 1647 *Westminster Confession of Faith*, the rite solemnly admits the recipient into the visible church both signifies and seals to him or her participation in the covenant of grace, in-grafting into Christ, regeneration, remission of sins, and his giving up unto God to newness of life. This grace of baptism is not merely symbolic, being "not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost to such, whether of age or infants, as that grace belongeth unto, according to the

counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time" (*Westminster Confession of Faith* XXX.5, 6). This Westminster confession also resonates well with African phenomenon of inclusivity, especially with regard to children. All the clergy understood the real meaning of baptism as an act of strengthening faith, giving assurance and giving a title. A big percentage of the laity did not understand the meaning of baptism and referred it as a means of attaining full membership into the church and just acquiring a name. The study findings also showed that both the clergy and the laity preferred infant baptism to adult baptism.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Through exploring various theological trajectories such as baptism and circumcision, African heritage versus Jewish heritage, Biblical theology versus African religious heritage and so on, the study was able to establish that the contestations regarding paedobaptism will remain until they are addressed from an African theological perspective, and in particular, through the motif of inculturation. Contestations of paedobaptism can only be understood in the light of inculturation theoretical framework. The clergy understood the real meaning of baptism as an act of strengthening faith. Further, the church needs to educate her members on the meaning of baptism, which is not only having a name and being a member of the church but for a holistic growth of the body of Christ.

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