

CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, KUMASI

FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

**PENTECOSTAL RESPONSE TO THE PRACTICE OF INFANT BAPTISM: A
CASE STUDY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST**

**PROJECT WORK
(LONG ESSAY)**

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DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

JUNE, 2022

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**A LONG ESSAY SUBMITTED TO CHRISTIAN SERVICE UNIVERSITY
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DEPARTMENT OF THEOLOGY

JUNE, 2022

DECLARATION

We hereby declare that this project work report is the result of our own original research except for sections of which references have been duly made and to the best of our knowledge no part of it has been presented to this University College or any other institution for the award of a degree.

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DEDICATION

To the glory of God, this work is dedicated to our parents, to the Head of Department Theology Dr. Samuel Brefo Adubofour and also to our supervisor Rev. Joseph Gyanvi Blay for his wonderful support during this work.

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CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Practically, all Christian denominations across the globe require their members to be baptized. Many scholars attribute the worldwide acceptance of the practice of baptism to the direct command of Jesus Christ as recorded in Matthew 28:19-20. Interestingly, despite many scriptures in the New Testament that make reference to baptism, only the above-mentioned scripture is prescriptive. The rest are exhortative and descriptive in nature. Thus, they only describe events about baptism rather than tell us how to baptize. This, according to White has given rise to diversified baptismal practices and views.¹ In the light of this, there have been heated debates concerning what constitutes a valid baptism among denominations. Whereas some denominations believe in the validity of infant baptism, others accept only baptism of persons who are mature enough to make moral decisions. Some denominations baptize by sprinkling or pouring while others strictly adhere to immersion. Others consider baptism as a minor doctrine of little importance while others see it as critical for salvation.² The emphasis of this research is on the validity of paedobaptism popularly, referred to as infant baptism.

Despite differences in scholarly opinions on evidences of baptismal practices over the years, there is a general consensus that existed in the New Testament church concerning the flexibility in its baptismal practice.³ Mark Beach, in agreement with a lot of New Testament scholars admits that the New Testament Church showed no apparent concern

¹ Thomas White, *What Makes Baptism Valid* (Texas: Fort Worth Press, 2006), 3.

² White, *What Makes Baptism Valid*, 3.

³ Roy Pointer, *Baptism, Reconciliation and Unity towards a Mutual Acceptance of Baptismal Differences* (PhD diss: University Of South Africa, 1994), 12.

for infant baptism.⁴ From research, there is no consensus on the existence of infant baptism in the early church among scholars. Some scholars like Didier, maintains that it is hard to deny its positive probability,⁵ as specific evidences for the practice of infant baptism was shown in the second and third centuries. Oppong et al note that in the fourth century, Basil, Ambrose, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, and others deferred baptism for a latter age.⁶ Warns reiterates that towards the end of the fourth century, the baptism of infants born to Christian parents became established as the norm. He notes that as Christianity became the official empire by the end of the fourth century with its growing body of legislation, any form of heresy became punishable by law. This development did not allow the continuity of a broad and flexible policy concerning baptism. It was in the thirteenth century that the Neo-Manicheans rejected infant baptism on the basis of the fact that infants are not mature enough to decide whether they believe or not. They insisted on Mark 16:16 which is a call for believers' baptism.⁷ The Anabaptist, also, during the Reformation renewed the rejection of infant baptism.⁸ Right from reformation to this current dispensation, the subject of baptism, particularly infant baptism, continues to polarize churches, like no other.

Paedobaptism or infant baptism simply refers to the practice of baptizing infants or young children.⁹ Majority of Christians who belongs to denominations that practice infant baptism. Catholics, Presbyterians, Methodists, Anglicans among others.¹⁰ On the other hand, there are credobaptists or believer's baptists who oppose infant baptism.

⁴ J. Mark Beach, "Original Sin, Infant Salvation, and the Baptism of Infants," *Mid-America Journal of Theology* 12 (2001): 47-50.

⁵ J. I. Packer, *Concise Theology* (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1993), 212.

⁶ Kenneth Oppong et al., "An Evaluation of Infant Baptism" *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science* 22, no. 7 (2017): 19-27.

⁷ Oppong et al., *An Evaluation of Infant Baptism*, 20.

⁸ Oppong et al., *An Evaluation of Infant Baptism*, 20.

⁹ Packer, *Concise Theology*, 201.

¹⁰ Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 54.

credobaptists or believer's Baptists are Christian who do not baptize infants.¹¹ They include denominations which hold this view believes that baptism is for only individuals who personally confess their faith in Jesus Christ, consequently their exclusion of underage children.¹² Many Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Ghana hold a believer Baptist position which encourage personal faith in Jesus before baptism. The Church of Pentecost is notable for their outright rejection of any infant baptism and the rebaptism of member who have been baptized during infancy. This alone stresses the extent to which infant baptism puts friction and tension among churches. It is this concern that prompted the researchers to undertake the task of investigating the reasons for the rejection of infant baptism by Ghanaian Pentecostals with the Church of Pentecost as a case study.

1.2 Problem Statement

The recent surge of interest in the debate concerning the proper subjects of baptism is not surprising. Beach points out that heated polemics, of course, are not foreign to the topic of infant baptism. After nearly five hundred years of debate among Protestant theologians no consensus has been reached.¹³ Countless articles, treatises, books, and pamphlets have been written in favor of and in opposition to the baptism of infants. In Ghana, the issue of rebaptism of members who have already been baptized in their infancy has raised concerns that needs the attention of scholars. This has resulted in serious tension between main line Pentecostal and historic mission churches like the Presbyterian, Catholic and Methodist Church. The Church of Pentecost, strictly adhere to the believer Baptist view, hence the rejection of infant baptism. Over the years the

¹¹ Peter Manns and Harding Meyer, *Luther's Ecumenical Significance: An Interconfessional Consultation* (UK: Fortress Press, 1984), 72.

¹² Manns and Meyer, *Luther's Ecumenical Significance*, 72.

¹³ Beach, *Original Sin, Infant Salvation, and the Baptism of Infants*, 47.

church of Pentecost has been firm on the subjects of baptism despite the historical, theological and biblical arguments advance in this century in defense of infant baptism. This research therefore purports to investigate the various reasons why the Pentecostals, particularly the Church of Pentecost rejects paedobaptism.

1.3 Research Questions

The main question that this research addresses is; why does the Church of Pentecost considers infant baptism as invalid? In addition to the main research question this study will provide answers to the following questions

- i. What constitutes a valid baptism on biblical grounds in the Church of Pentecost?
- ii. Are there biblical references to infant baptism? If not, what historical events accounted for the practice of infant baptism?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

The main aim of this research is to investigate the reasons why the Church of Pentecost rejects the practice of infant baptism. The objectives are;

- i. To study the factors that makes baptism valid in the perspective of the Church of Pentecost.
- ii. To examine the biblical reference to infant baptism.
- iii. To explore the biblical basis contrary to infant baptism from the perspective of the Church of Pentecost.

1.5 Scope and Focus of the Study

The focus of this study is to examine the basis for the rejection of infant baptism. Even though the researchers aim is to draw implication for Pentecostal churches in Ghana, the research is limited to the Church of Pentecost in the Kumasi Metropolis. Kumasi is the capital city of the Ashanti Region of Ghana in the West Africa.

1.6 Methodology

This study is a qualitative research and it employs the phenomenological approach. A phenomenological approach according to Glaser and Straus, is suitable for this study as the researchers seek to understand a particular human experience through the description provided by people involved.¹⁴ Therefore the phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study as the researchers intend to examine the experience of members of the Church of Pentecost in relation to baptism. Moreover, this research also employs a case study method as it studies a small group of people which are frequently involved in the account of the subjects themselves.¹⁵

1.6.1 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection methods includes both primary and secondary sources.

1.6.1.1 Primary Sources

The data was collected through the use of open-ended questionnaires that were administered to Church members to elicit information regarding baptism. Structured interviews were also used for pastors, church leaders, and members in order to capture

¹⁴ Glaser Barney and Anselm Straus, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967), 96.

¹⁵ Colorado State University, “*The Writing Studio: Case Studies*”,
url:<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/page.cfm?pageid=1285&guideid=60> (accessed on 20th March 2016).

their knowledge on the topic at hand. These interviews enabled the researchers and respondents to develop a personal friendship and rapport which also created a conducive environment for the researchers to meet the respondents face to face to elicit relevant pieces of primary information.

1.6.1.2 Secondary Sources

The researchers also consulted books, thesis, journals, newspapers, biographies, brochures and official documents of Calvary Charismatic Centre that are relevant to the topic under study.

1.6.2 Sample/Sampling Procedure or Technique

A purposive sampling technique was used to select respondents. A purposive sampling technique is a non-probability sampling that is selected based on characteristics of a population and the objective of the study.¹⁶ Pastors, leaders and members who possess relevant information were selected or sampled for interview. The research reached out to pastors, elders, deacons and members in the Church of Pentecost with in the Kumasi metropolis.

The sample size of 50 was drawn different branches of the Church and the breakdown was as follows:

Pastors-	10
Elders-	15
Deacons and Deaconesses-	15
Members-	10

¹⁶ Thought.co, *Understanding Purposive Sampling: An Overview of the Method and Its Applications*, accessed on 23 January, 2019. Url: <https://www.thoughtco.com/purposive-sampling-3026727> accessed on 12th February, 2019.

1.6.3 Data Analysis

Content analysis approach was used for the analysis of data. According to Creswell, the process of data analysis “involves making sense out of texts and image data.”¹⁷ It involves preparing the data by moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of data.¹⁸ Nachmias also says “it is a method where the content of the message forms the basis for drawing inferences and conclusions on the content.”¹⁹ Ocra, affirms that content analysis is used to determine the presence of certain words or concept within the text or sets of text.²⁰

1.7 Literature Review

This section entails scholarly writings and opinion that are relevant to the topic of infant baptism.

1.7.1 Administration of Baptism

Ericson, like many other contemporary theologians admits the universality of baptism in Christians churches across the globe.²¹ He observes however that despite its universal acceptance, differences occur in the mode and manner of baptism and in the significance of the rite. There are scholars who hold that the way and manner baptism is administered is not so important whereas others believe that every aspects of baptism should strictly correspond with scriptures. For instance Calvin in his masterpiece *The Institute of Christian Religion* writes;

¹⁷ J. W. Creswell, “Narrative Research: A Comparison of Two Data Analysis Approaches” *Qualitative Inquiry* 8 No.3 (2002): 320-329.

¹⁸ Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 23.

¹⁹ Nachmias, *Research Methods in the Social Sciences*, 23.

²⁰ Bernard Ocra, *Research Methods: Processes, Concepts and Methods* (Accra: Varsity Scholar Series, 2012), 45.

²¹ Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academics, 1998), 1100.

But whether the person being baptized should be wholly immersed, and whether thrice or once, whether he should only be sprinkled with poured water—these details are of no importance, but ought to be optional to churches according to the diversity of countries.²²

It is clear, from this statement, that critical importance was not attached to the manner in which baptism is administered in the writings of Calvin. On the other hand theologians, like Lemke, hold that even if one aspect of the rite is not performed right such a baptism is invalid.²³ A chief instance is the Article 10 of *The Articles of Religious Belief*, entitled “Baptist Loyalty to Distinctive Baptist Doctrines,” which asserts that “the Baptist church stands for vital and distinctive truths; to many of which other denominations do not adhere, and that we cannot compromise these truths without disloyalty to the Scriptures and our Lord.”²⁴ This statement underscores the severity which that Baptist church defends what they believe to be the right mode and manner in which baptism is to be performed.

1.7.2 Components of the Ordinance of Baptism

Thomas white, after a survey of a vast number of literature related to baptism, observes that there are six overlapping components of the ordinance or sacrament of baptism that has bred controversy among churches over the years.²⁵ He identifies the mode, formula, church, administrator, subject and meaning of baptism as component that are necessary to understand the baptismal stance of any denomination. This literature review briefly captures the controversies concerning the mode of baptism. The researchers focus on

²² John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, in Library of Christian Classics, trans. by F. L. Battles, ed. John T. McNeill (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960), 1320.

²³ Editorial Introduction: Baptists in Dialogue Dr. Steve W. Lemke.

²⁴ Collin Hansen, *Young, Restless, Reformed: A Journalist's Journey with the New Calvinists* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 23.

²⁵ Thomas White, *The Proper Subject of Baptism* (Fort Worth: Center for Theological Research, 2006), 33.

this because it is closely related the issue of infant baptism which will be discussed thoroughly in later chapters.

1.7.3 Mode of Baptism

In terms of the mode of baptism, no consensus has been reached on the appropriate mode of baptism. Scholars and denominations are divided mainly into immersion baptism and sprinklings baptism. Whereas the Methodists, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Catholics are not strict on the mode of baptism, many Pentecostals and Baptists exclusively adhere to baptism by immersion. White notes that Baptists have universally held that immersion is the only proper mode of baptism, and without immersion there is no true baptism.²⁶ He explains that the New Testament continually uses the word *baptizo*. This Greek word has been brought directly into the English language as the word, “baptize.” Properly translated, instead of transliterated, this word means “immerse.”²⁷ It is in this light that Mckim defines immersion baptism as a method of baptism in which a person is being immersed completely in water.²⁸ Walls indicates that baptism gives the symbolic representation of death, burial and resurrections of Christ which can better be fulfilled by immersion.²⁹ White emphatically concludes that immersion is so central to baptism that without it the ordinance is nullified.³⁰ Ericson also notes that many scholars admit that the predominant meaning of that Greek term is to dip or to plunge under water. He adds that even Martin Luther and John Calvin acknowledged immersion to be the basic meaning of the term and the original form of baptism practiced by the early church.³¹

²⁶ White, *The Proper Subject of Baptism*, 32.

²⁷ White, *The Proper Subject of Baptism*, 32.

²⁸ Donald McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 25.

²⁹ William Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1862), 580.

³⁰ White, *The Proper Subject of Baptism*, 32.

³¹ Ericson, *Christian Theology*, 1016.

1.7.4 Argument from the Etymology of the Word *Batizo* in Favor of Sprinkling

On the other hand, some scholars hold the etymological argument concerning the Greek word *baptizô* favours sprinkling. Maskell argues that the Greek word *baptizô* is not to be confused with a synonymous word, *baptô*. He elaborates that *baptizo* does not imply immersion but washing. It is *baptô* which directly imply immersion.³² Walls adds that there are no instances in the Greek New Testament or the Septuagint (LXX) where *baptizô* must and can only mean immersion. He indicates that there are instances in the New Testament where *baptizô* is auto-suggestive of pouring or sprinkling.³³ Moreover a careful study of the New Testament reveals that immersion is impossible or improbable in almost all the instances of baptism recorded in the New Testament.³⁴ The first century book on teachings of the apostles called *Didache* explicitly mentions only pouring as a legitimate mode. *The Westminster Confession of Faith* while not denying the legitimacy of baptism by immersion intimates that “Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.”³⁵

1.8 Significance of the Study

This study is of crucial significance to the church under study and the church universal as it attempts to clarify controversial issues related to the doctrine and practice of baptism. It is quite clear that the doctrine of baptism accounts for many schisms and polarization among denominations.

- i. A study like this highlights the difference and similarities between churches that adhere to paedobaptism and those who are against it.

³² William Maskell, *Monumenta ritualia ecclesiae anglicanae* (1846).

³³ Wall, *The History of Infant Baptism*, 61.

³⁴ Luke 11:38, Mark 7:4, Matthew 20:22–23 and Galatians 3:27.

³⁵ Westminster Confession of Faith," par. 6.141, *Presbyterian Book of Confessions*, 1967.

- ii. Such researches are of priority in interfaith dialogues especially in the recent attempt to bridge the gap between churches polarized as a result of baptismal doctrinal differences.
- iii. Moreover, this study constitutes a wakeup call to church leaders to train their members on the rudiments of baptism. The finding of the research work would add to the knowledge of the existing literature and also serve as a reference material for further research.

1.9 Organization of the Chapters

The work is systematized sequentially into five chapters. Chapter one focuses on the introduction, the background to the study, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations of the study, scope of the study, literature review as well as the organization of the study. The second chapter deals with the background to the Church of Pentecost. The third chapter focuses on the doctrinal stance of the Church of Pentecost in relation to baptism with special emphasis on the biblical justification of the rejection of infant baptism. The fourth chapter analyzes the data and comes out with implications for the study. Finally, chapter five concludes the case study by providing a general conclusion, summary of the findings, and recommendations.

CHAPTER TWO

BACKGROUND TO THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST (COP)

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the entire study. This chapter captures the background of the Church of Pentecost. The chapter starts with the history of James McKeown; his migration to Gold Coast and his missionary campaign that resulted in the establishment of the Church of Pentecost. The chapter also includes a discussion of the Church's doctrines, practices, governance, structure, and worship style.

2.2 James Mckeown

The beginning of the Church of Pentecost can be traced to the activities of James McKeown, an Irish missionary who was sent to the Gold Coast by the Apostolic Church in 1937. He was born in Scotland, a place called Gleinbiog on the 12th of September, 1900. When he attained age 11, he left school in order to help his father to farm in Ballymena.³⁶ He later became a tram driver. James Mckeown was introduced to Pentecostalism by his parents who were first and foremost Presbyterians but later joined the Pentecost Church as Elim. At age 19 he accepted Jesus as his lord and personal saviour and got baptized by Rev. George Jeffreys. His prayer life attracted a woman called Sophia and they eventually got married in 1927.³⁷ The marriage led them to settle in Glasgow where they joined the Apostolic Church. This change of denomination happened because there was no branch of Elim Pentecostal Church in Glasgow. In 1935, a prophecy came at the general convention of the Apostolic Church that James Mckeown and his wife should travel to West Africa as missionaries. It happened that

³⁶ Kingsley E. Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity* (Accra: CPCS, 2001), 12.

³⁷ Larbi, *Pentecostalism*, 34.

both of them were not present at the time they prophesy came forth and they eventually turned that proposition down. However after a year and some few months McKeown and wife accepted this missionary mandate and came to Gold Coast due to the persistent persuasion of his wife.³⁸

2.3 Arrival of James McKeown

James McKeown, the first Pentecostal missionary to work in Ghana from the United Kingdom arrived on the shores of this country in 1937. He was purposefully sent to the Gold Coast to assist a group of believers at Asamankese who were yearning for more of God. They were of the Apostolic Faith under the leadership of Rev. Peter Newman Anim. During this time the apostolic Church had shifted their affiliation from the Faith Tabernacle in Philadelphia, USA to Apostolic Church based in Bradford, UK. No sooner had he Arrived than was he threatened with the most vicious killer of missionaries in Africa, Malaria. After weeks of prayer and seeking God's face the sickness only deteriorated. Interestingly, the Apostolic Church held strongly to the doctrine of "only prayer for healing". Thus for them, seeking medical attention from a hospital was against their faith. Such a step, according to their faith will punch holes in the faith of a believer to rely on God in times of need. McKeown, however resorted to medical help from the European hospital, now called the Ridge Hospital and spent ten days in the treatment. He was met with a serious misunderstanding on his arrival. He relocated to Winneba and eventually broke away from the Anim's in 1939. Peter Anim, the leader and founder of the Apostolic Church in Gold Coast after this dispute, changed

³⁸ Larbi, *Pentecostalism: The Eddies of Ghanaian Christianity*, 12.

the name of his faction to Christ Apostolic Church. McKeown however, maintained the name Apostolic Church for his faction.³⁹

Due to some other conflicts which resulted in the amendment in the constitution, McKeown was dismissed from the Apostolic Church in Bradford, UK. The adherents of the apostolic faith in Gold Coast however wanted him as their superintendent. After a unanimous decision the branch of the Apostolic Church in Ghana severed their affiliation with the parent Church in UK. Thus in 1953 the Church led by James McKeown became an independent church and was called the Apostolic Church of Gold Coast. The Church suffered from conflicts and litigations over properties to the point that it caught the attention of the president of Ghana, Dr. Kwame Nkrumah. Dr. Kwame Nkrumah ruled that McKeown should be left alone to head the Church and that the name of the ministry should be changed to avoid conflict with the parent Church in Bradford, UK. It was in the year 1962 that the name Gold Coast Apostolic Church was changed to the Church of Pentecost (COP). James McKeown, took a wise step to train the local people to assist him. By the time he was retiring he had able Ghanaians to take over the ministry.⁴⁰

2.4 Doctrine and Practices

The CoP subscribes to almost all the fundamental doctrines of faith of the Apostolic Church and other classical Pentecostals. These are written in the constitution of the Church and most of its documents such as baptismal certificates and the Ministers' Manual. The articles of faith include the Bible, the one true God, human beings'

³⁹ Christine Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana: 3000 Churches in 50 Years – The Story of James McKeown and the Church of Pentecost* (Chichester: New Wine Press. 1989), 122.

⁴⁰ Matthew Larbi-Wetey, *The Legacy of Pastor James McKeown* (Accra: XCHIP Communications, 2014), 14.

depraved nature, the Saviour, repentance, justification and sanctification. Others are the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, baptism, gifts and fruit of the Holy Spirit, afterlife, tithes and offering and divine healing.⁴¹ The Apostolic Church was a church that displayed all the spectrum of classical Pentecostalism. The Dean of Pentecostal studies Hollenweger describes the Apostolic Church as a church that 'gives greater play to the gifts of the Spirit'.⁴² In the CoP, as with the Apostolic Church, men are called to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. Others are called to the offices of elders and deacons. Women are also called as deaconesses and not ordained into the full-time pastoral ministry. Besides, the Apostolic Church was strict on certain practices including the prohibition of things such as drinking alcohol and smoking. Members who were found visiting places which were considered questionable, such as the cinema and concert shows and those who fell sin were to be disciplined. The CoP followed similar practices.⁴³ The CoP places emphasis on the role of the Holy Spirit in one's life and encourages all its members to experience what the Pentecostals call the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The role of the Holy Spirit and power in the CoP go beyond what Eastwood attempts to identify as the priesthood of all believers.⁴⁴ The role of the Holy Spirit is associated with what Roger Stronstad explains as the prophethood of all believers, where all could become powerful and confront witchcraft in their evangelistic activities.⁴⁵ This sort of 'prophethood' of all believers appeals to the peasants and downtrodden who constitute the majority of the Ghanaian population and as such help in propagating the gospel which is evidenced by rapid growth of the CoP.

⁴¹ Walter J. Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1972), 192.

⁴² Walter J. Hollenweger, 'After Twenty Years Research on Pentecostalism,' *Inter Notional Review of Mission* LXXV, no. 297 (1985): 10–11.

⁴³ (Apostolic Church 1937, 35–44, 238–239; Hollenweger 1972)

⁴⁴ Cyril Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers: An Examination of the Doctrine from the Reformation to the Present Day* (London: The Epworth Press, 1960), 115.

⁴⁵ Eastwood, *The Priesthood of All Believers*, 117.

2.5 Structure and Government

The Church's headquarters is in Ghana. At the top of the church's structure is the general council which consists of all confirmed ministers of the Church, area executive committee members, chairmen of boards and committees and ministries directors. Below the general council is the 15-man executive council that sees to the administration of the church. The area (and national) presbyteries, chaired by apostles and prophets, come under the Executive Council. Under the area presbyteries, are the district presbyteries. The district presbyteries are headed by pastors. At the bottom of the administrative structure of the Church are the local presbyteries, headed by presiding elders. The Church of Pentecost currently has 67 administrative areas in Ghana alone and 107 worldwide in 105 nations including Ghana. These ministries are women, evangelism, children, men and youth. Some major boards and committees in the CoP are the finance board, Pentecost social services board, ministerial committee, pension board, estate committee and the missions board. The mission board falls under the international missions' director, who is directly accountable to the chairman of the Church, on the same level as the church's general secretary.⁴⁶ This structure makes the members feel secure in its formality, accountability and disciplinary measures.

2.6 Worship

Worship in the Church is similar to other Classical Pentecostals⁴⁷ with some cultural diversities.⁴⁸ These diversities are portrayed in activities such as the giving of testimonies, praises, special times of prayer called worship, and preaching. There is the opportunity to express oneself before God in diverse ways – prayer, dancing,

⁴⁶ Kofi Abrefa Busia, *The Position of the Chief in Modern Asante* (Oxford: University Press. 1951), 11.

⁴⁷ Classical Pentecostal Churches refer to older Pentecostal churches like the Apostolic Church, the Church of Pentecost and the Assemblies of God.

⁴⁸ Hollenweger, *The Pentecostals*, 140.

testimonies and local theologisation. An example of such local theologisation is the example of Afua Kuma whose application of the appellations of chiefs to God has become a classical example of local theologising within African theology.⁴⁹ Eventually the church developed a form of worship, especially its songs that have had an impact on Ghanaian society.⁵⁰ Often as preaching and prayer go on, a member would receive through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit a song that would be sung spontaneously, without having to write it. Larbi observes that the CoP 'has bequeathed to Ghanaian Christianity more locally brewed Christian songs than any other Church in the country'.⁵¹

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has captured the background to the Church of Pentecost. The chapter has captured the history of the establishment of the Church of Pentecost on the shores of Ghana as the essential characteristics that distinguish it from other denominations. The subsequent chapter looks at the doctrine and practice of the COP in relation to baptism.

⁴⁹ Kwame Bediako, *Christianity in Ghana: The Renewal of a Non-Western Religion* (Edinburgh: Orbis Book, 1995), 67.

⁵⁰ Leonard, *A Giant in Ghana*, 34.

⁵¹ Emmanuel Kingsley Larbi, 'Sustaining the Growth.' In *James McKeown Memorial Lectures: 50 Years of the Church of Pentecost*, edited by Opoku Onyinah (Accra: The Church of Pentecost. 2004), 143.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRACTICE OF BAPTISM IN THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST (COP)

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided a background to the Church of Pentecost (COP). This chapter however focuses on the doctrinal stance of the Church in relation to baptism. Special emphasis will be placed on the reasons for the rejection of infant baptism. The chapter however starts with the meaning, mode and formulae of baptism in the Church of Pentecost. The chapter proceeds to discuss the subjects of baptism which forms the core of the study.

3.2 The Meaning of Baptism

There is a considerable difference in the understanding and practice of baptism among churches. The Church of Pentecost attaches much importance to the practice of baptism, which is a prerequisite of membership of the Church.⁵² Unlike some contemporary charismatic Churches that attach little importance to the practice of baptism, the COP is much particular about it. The Church only adheres to two sacraments that is the Lord's Supper and baptism. In the first place the COP regards baptism as a direct command of Jesus to the church. Wiafe explains that as far as the great commission (Matthew 28: 19) is concern, baptism will forever be prioritized in the Church of Pentecost. He elaborates that this command is clearly spelt out in such a way that it is hard for a Bible-believing Church to ignore that. Moreover, according to Minta, to ignore this command constitutes an act of disobedience to the Jesus Christ.⁵³

⁵² Interview with Elder Annorh Wiafe, F. K. Amful memorial Temple, Atimatim.

⁵³ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

From the interviews conducted, it was discovered that baptism conveys three main meanings to the Church under study; the believer's public profession of faith, the believer's identification with Christ, and the initiatory ordinance into the local Church. Firstly, it was discovered that the Church of Pentecost believe that baptism is a symbolic ordinance which identifies the believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To substantiate this claim, Bright points to Romans 6:3-4 which says

Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life.⁵⁴

Minta also points to Romans 6:4 where Apostle Paul reiterates that we were submerged under water, our old nature was crucified with Christ.” In this respect Minta elaborated that a believer baptism identifies him the death and resurrection of Christ. Minta explains these symbols help members to understand the dynamics of the new creation.

Secondly, the Church of Pentecost understands baptism to be the declaration of one's faith. In an interview with Minta, he reiterated that the acceptance of the gospel is an inward and personal decision of faith and repentance. However, this decision is made public through baptism.⁵⁵ Thus, it gives the church as well as the world a witness and testimony of the conversion of a believer. He then pointed to the experience of Phillip in Acts 8:26 Philip, when presenting the Gospel to the Ethiopian eunuch who did so in such a way that the eunuch responded not with a prayer or by signing a card, but by asking to be baptized.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Interview with Elder Bright Acheampong, Mount Olives Assembly, Gynase.

⁵⁵ Interview with Bright.

⁵⁶ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta.

Minta adds that the last part of the great commission instructs the church to teach converts all things. This brings to the fore the necessity for them to associate or gather for further instruction. The place for such activity is the New Testament church. This is conformity to practice of the early church as baptism resulted in the converts gathering daily for additional instruction. This is to imply that baptism according to the Church of Pentecost, should be associated with a local church.⁵⁷ Minta notes in an interview that separates para-church groups, seminary classrooms, and private Bible study groups do not qualify to baptize because they are not local churches. However, missionaries sent by a local church can baptize.⁵⁸

3.3 Mode of Baptism

The Church of Pentecost, like the Baptist Church and other Pentecostal churches has universally upheld immersion as the only proper mode of baptism. Thus, without immersion there is no true baptism. The first argument often made to justify this position is an etymological one. The New Testament continually uses the word *baptizo*. This Greek word has been brought directly into the English language as the word, “baptize.” Properly translated, instead of transliterated, this word means “immerse.”⁵⁹ Immersion, according to Renard, is the submersion of the whole body beneath the surface water.⁶⁰ He elaborates that there is partial or complete immersion. From the interviews it was unearthed that the only acceptable mode of baptism in the Church of Pentecost is by total or complete immersion. As a result, the Church of Pentecost rejects sprinkling as they hold that there is no biblical evidence to support this practice. Boadi explains that the symbolic representation of the ordinance, the death, burial, and

⁵⁷ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta.

⁵⁸ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta.

⁵⁹ Philip Schaff, *On Original Sin: Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1999), 237.

⁶⁰ John Renard, *The Handy Religion Answer Book* (London: Barnes and Nobles 2004), 183.

resurrection of Christ, can only be fulfilled by immersion. He posits that immersion is so central to baptism that without it the ordinance is nullified. This is the primary reason why there is an immersion baptistery in many auditoriums of the Church of Pentecost.⁶¹

Minta further elaborates that the biblical references to John's baptism in river Jordan and Aenon (Matthew 3:6; Mark 1:5; John 3:23) makes clear that baptism was understood to be done by being immersed in the water. This resounds with the argument put forward by proponents of immersion. Many, but not limited to Pentecostal scholars, favor the notion that the proper and biblical mode for baptism is by immersion.⁶² Jeremias, for instance, argues that only immersion demands much or enough water and John baptized in Aenon because there was "much water there." He elaborates that Jesus went to John at Jordan River to be baptized and after the baptism, the Bible records that Jesus "came up out of the water" (Mark 1:9, 10; Matthew 3:16).⁶³ He adds that the Greek word used signifies that Jesus was immersed in the water. Hodge also expounds clearly that, Philip's baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch was by immersion. He points to the fact that they both went "into the water" and "came up out of the water" (Acts 8:38, 39).⁶⁴ It is in this light that Plummer writes, "it is only when baptism is administered by immersion that its full significance is seen."⁶⁵

3.4 Formula for Baptism

Baptismal formula simply refers to words which characteristically accompany the administration of water baptism during Christian baptism. It is these words that give

⁶¹ Interview with Stephen Boadi, Mount Olives Assembly, Gynase.

⁶² Joachim Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism: A Further Study in Reply to Kurt Aland* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2004), 9.

⁶³ Jeremias, *The Origins of Infant Baptism*, 12.

⁶⁴ Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology, Abridged Edition* (Michigan: Grand Rapids, Baker Books House, 1988), 483.

⁶⁵ Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Luke, The International Critical Commentary*, 5th ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1981 reprint), 88.

definition to the symbolic act of administering the water baptism and call on the power of God as named in the formula. This formula, like all the other aspects of baptism, varies from one denomination to the other. Plummer observes that there are three possibilities in the New Testament, all of which are used by some churches. A very common one can be found in Acts 2:38; Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” Same formula is found in Acts 18:19 and 10:48. The second formula is found in Galatians 3:27; as many of you as were baptized into Christ. The third and most popular formula is Matthew 28:19; “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This is what is popularly referred to as the Trinitarian formulae. This formula is the one endorsed by the Church of Pentecost. Boadi explains that during baptism, the candidate is immersed completely in water three times, while that minister in charge of the baptism recites the formulae, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son and the Spirit.”

3.5 The Subjects of Baptism

The proper subjects for baptism is the bone of contention for this research. This is one of the main features that set the Church of Pentecost apart from the main line orthodox churches like the Methodist and Presbyterian Church of Ghana. The CoP holds that only persons who have made conscious decisions to be Christians are the proper subjects of baptism. Minta points to the Great Commission which admonish the Church to “...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them...” he explains that from the above scripture, it is those who are made to become believers or disciples that are baptized. It is enshrined in the article 11.5 of the Church’s constitution that

We believe in the sacrament of Baptism by immersion as a testimony of a convert who has attained a responsible age of 13 years. (Mt. 3:16; Mt. 28:19; Mk. 1:9, 10; 16:16; Ac. 2:38). Infants

and children are not baptized, but are dedicated to the Lord (Mk. 10:13-16; Lk. 2:22-24, 34). We believe in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper or Holy Communion, which should be partaken by all members who are in full fellowship (Lk. 22:19, 20; Ac. 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-33).⁶⁶

From the above article it is clear that only persons who have attained age 13 or above are considered eligible for baptism. It is only such persons who are considered to possess the ability to understand the significance of baptism and why they want to be baptized.⁶⁷ As far as the Church of Pentecost is concerned infants are only dedicated to the Lord and are not to be baptized.

Anyone who has turned thirteen and new converts above that are taken through a series of lesson as preparation for baptism. Usually, the baptismal class last for about three weeks to a month. Osei observes that, the duration of the baptismal class is depended on the candidates. How fast they understand lesson and how they cope with rules and teaching can be shortened or elongated during the preparation class.⁶⁸ He notes that candidates are taught the significance of the baptism, the need and the process of salvation, faith and sanctification among other related topics. This class also affords baptismal candidates the opportunity to seek clarification that on any topic that relates to their salvation and Christian life. The baptismal class is a non-negotiable prerequisite for candidates in the church of Pentecost. From the interviews conducted the researcher some theological justification for the rejection of infant baptism.

⁶⁶ Constitution of the Church of Pentecost, Tenets Article 1.5.

⁶⁷ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta.

⁶⁸ Interview with Stephen Osei, Mount Oilves Assembly, Gynase.

3.5.1 *Infant Baptism*

This section entails two main arguments that were put forward by the respondents against the baptism of infants. The first one is concerned with the lack of biblical foundation for infant baptism and the second is also about the New Testament's format for salvation.

3.5.2 *Lack of Biblical Precedence*

The first argument advanced towards the practice of infant baptism is the lack of biblical foundation. Minta posits that throughout his career as a theologian and reverend minister, he had never found any scripture in the entire Bible that gives an express command to baptize infants.⁶⁹ Moreover, he argues that there is no proven case of infant baptism in the New Testament. Thus, there is no reference to anyone born to Christian parents who was baptized in the New Testament age. Boadi adds that almost all arguments that he had heard in favor of infant baptism is rooted in church history rather than in scripture. He explains that explicit reference to infant baptism is only found several decades after the apostolic age.⁷⁰

The researchers probed further to inquire about the argument of household baptism. There are events in the New Testament in which entire households were baptized. Example are the Cornelius' Household (Acts 10), Lydia's Household (Acts 16), the Philippian Jailer's household (Acts 16), Crispus' household (Acts 18) and Stephanas' household (1 Corinthians 1). Logically, the assumption that children within these households were baptized included is not farfetched in this context. In response to this many respondents argue that household baptism does not necessarily imply that that

⁶⁹ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta.

⁷⁰ Interview with Stephen Boadi, Mount Olives Assembly, Gyinase.

children were included. Felix holds that at least if there could have been few or even one instance in scripture if the infant baptism was permitted in the New Testament era.⁷¹

3.5.3 *The New Testament Format*

Another argument that came up on the field of study is concerned with the New Testament format for salvation. Minta hints that throughout the New Testament there is a systematic order for salvation. The entire new birth examples in the book of Acts start with evangelization or preaching of the gospel, and the development of faith in response to the gospel and then baptism. He posits that never in any case did baptism precede faith in the story of the apostles. Examples cited include (Acts 2:41) "...those who had received his word were baptized ... and (Acts 8:12) but when they believed Philip preaching the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike. Unbelieving adults and children who have not reached the age of accountability were not baptized. Boadi, in agreement with Minta, further advanced the faith-before-baptism argument. Boadi based his argument on Matthew 28: 19; go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. He explains that children cannot be baptized because baptism constitutes a public declaration of faith in obedience to Christ. From the above text it is clear that faith precedes baptism.

3.6 Preparation for baptism

The Church has not got any elaborate formula for preparing new converts for baptism. According to Mr Otoo Addo, the time for baptism found in the command of the Great Commission is interpreted by the Church as immediately after conversion. In view of

⁷¹ Interview with Elder Felix Opoku, F. K. Amful memorial Temple, Atimatim.

this, baptism is organized and administered in every district and area during major gatherings like conventions and rallies and so all converts in the various assemblies (local Churches or branches) are brought to such gatherings to join the newly won converts at the gatherings for baptism. If any preparation will be done it may be done for those converts won at the various assemblies waiting to be baptized in a convention or rally in the district. It is believed that any form of teaching must be done after baptism since the clause "...teaching them to obey" is preceded by "...baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" in the Great Commission (Matt 28:19-20).

3.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the doctrinal stance of the church of Pentecost in relation to baptism in general. However particular attention was paid to the reason why infant baptism is rejected. The subsequent chapter entails an analysis of the data presented in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST AND PROPONENT OF INFANT BAPTISM

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter considered the doctrinal stance and practices of the Church of Pentecost in relation to baptism. This chapter is dedicated to analysis of the findings presented in the previous chapter. It entails the various arguments put forward to establish the historical and biblical foundation of infant baptism. The chapter focuses on how the Church of Pentecost responds to these arguments.

4.2 Views against Infant Baptism

From the interaction with resource persons in the Church of Pentecost, it was discovered that the lack of a single trace of infant baptism is enough to disprove its apostolic authority.⁷² Even though Calvin's argument, as stated earlier, seems to give room for the practice of infant baptism, the same argument also holds it optional for those who must baptize. If the mode is optional as Calvin suggests the other factors leading to the choice of baptism by immersion have been considered by the Church. Minta remarks that all evidence presented in favor of infant baptism shows that it was developed and spread after the apostolic era.⁷³ He pointed out that the basis of every Christian doctrine is scriptures rather than history. He also explained that the bible is sufficient enough to guide the life and practices of Christians. This can be supported by the fact that if the Bible is normative then interpreting baptism to symbolize "dying and resurrecting with Christ, as pointed out earlier by Walls, must be accepted as the basis

⁷² Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁷³ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

for baptizing by immersion. In this case by immersing someone into the water means being buried and rising up into newness. Stephen Addo adds that he has been taught as a members and leader in the Church of Pentecost that the only authoritative source for the formulation of Christian doctrine is the infallible word of God and therefore the teaching of church fathers is not enough to defend the practice of infant baptism.⁷⁴ Even though the respondents admitted that the historical evidence presented in defense of infant baptism is indeed factual, and so lack of biblical precedence alone is enough to nullify their arguments.

4.3 Comparison between Baptism and Circumcision

Again, there is an interesting comparison between the two rites. Gentile converts in the Old Testament had to believe in God and be circumcised just as converts in the New Testament have to believe in Jesus and be baptized. As those born in Jewish homes were circumcised in anticipation of the Jewish faith in which they were raised so are infants born in Christian household are baptized in anticipation of the Christian faith in which they were raised.

Proponents of paedobaptism are of the view that baptism is not merely a sign of the new covenant but a powerful and transforming action of the Lord. Ferguson remarks that to regard baptism as a symbol is to empty it of its efficacy.⁷⁵ He is of the view that baptism in obedience to the command of God can begin at the earliest points of an individual's life and new creation becomes increasingly evident from that point forward. As an initiation into the new covenant, baptism bestows privileges as well as responsibilities on the person who is baptized. He again posits that baptism changes

⁷⁴ Interview with Stephen Addo, Mount Olives Assembly, Gynase.

⁷⁵ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 23.

one's status, alters personal identity and expresses God's favor as it penetrates the heart and cleanses the conscience.⁷⁶ Even though baptism combined with faith brings about union with Christ but does not cause an infant to be saved but rather makes grace available for the future salvation.

From the interviews conducted, it was discovered that the Church of Pentecost does not subscribe to the notion that baptism replaced circumcision in the New Testament. Minta explains that they are two separate rites and they were both practiced in the New Testament times.⁷⁷ In the replacement argument above, if the descendants of Abraham must be circumcised in their infant stage in order to identify with him then one has to identify with Christ's death and resurrection, in the later stages of life through baptism, since baptism symbolizes his death and resurrection. Minta again argues that if this was so Christ our example would have been baptized as an infant and would not have waited till he was matured enough to be baptized by John the Baptist. He points out that proponents of infant baptism refer to Colossians 2:11-12 merely because the words circumcision and baptism appears in the same verse. However, he affirms that the apostle never taught replacement as paedobaptists claim. To substantiate this claim, he pointed to the fact that convert in the New Testament had to repent, believe and be baptized to join the community of faith. He also argues that unlike in the Old Testament, admission into the New Testament community of faith is not through physical birth but through spiritual rebirth.⁷⁸ The pre-requisites of this spiritual rebirth are internal transformation, personal knowledge of Jesus Christ and personal forgiveness of sins. It is clear that infants do not pose that capability to go through this process.⁷⁹ Even though

⁷⁶ Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church*, 23.

⁷⁷ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁷⁸ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁷⁹ Interview with Stephen Addo, Mount Oilves Assembly, Gyinase.

the view of the practitioners of infant baptism seem to make sense, the most important fact here is the personal responsibility of the one being baptized is key to the exercise.

Moreover, Annorh Wiafe adds that there is a dichotomy between the physical seed and spiritual seed of Abraham in the Abrahamic covenant. Respectively each seed receives particular blessing tailored to its kind.⁸⁰ For instance a Ghanaian can be made a partaker of the spiritual seed of Abraham and not the physical seed. A Ghanaian who is not connected to the physical lineage of Abraham can still attain salvation because of the promise made to the spiritual descendants of Abraham.⁸¹ He then concludes that scripture spells it out clearly that it is only the spiritual seed of Abraham that receives salvation. For the fact that no salvation promise is made to any other seed apart from spiritual seed of Abraham, it is an error to claim spiritual blessing for the physical seed of a believer. The procedure for partaking in the Abrahamic covenant with salvation as it consequent is personal knowledge of ones sin, repentance and profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Since infants are not capable of this, they in any do not qualify to be baptized.

4.3.1 *The Great Commission*

The great commission, the most popular verse as far as the command to baptize is concern makes reference to “all nations.” Matthew 28:18 -20 reads

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (ESV)

⁸⁰Interview with Elder Annorh Wiafe, F. K. Amful memorial Temple, Atimatim.

⁸¹ Interview with Elder Annorh Wiafe, F. K. Amful memorial Temple, Atimatim.

Addo explains that, the Church of Pentecost admits that children are part of the all nation being referred to in the great commission. However children are to be trained to an age where they are morally competent also be able to freely choose between right and wrong.⁸² Minta asserts that it is this light that the Bible calls believed parents to bring their children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4), and when this is rightly done, they would with the discipline and instructions grow and not depart from the Lord (Proverbs 22:8).⁸³ He also pointed out that baptism demands faith and faith consists of intellect, emotions and choice. Mensah adds that faith is defined faith from a biblical perspective and that it is impossible for an infant to have faith.⁸⁴ Even with the baptism of John, personal repentance from sin was a prerequisite. As a result it is logical to conclude that objects of the great commission believe person who have reached the age of accountability.

4.3.2 The Household Argument

The views collated from the respondents from the Church of Pentecost are diametrically opposed to the ones express above. In the first place it was discovered that as far as the Church of Pentecost is concerned, household baptism does not in any way underscore infant baptism. Minta remarks that, it is only baseless inferences and assumptions that lead paedobaptist to conclude that household baptism included infants.⁸⁵ He points to the fact in the book of Acts about Peter's command to be baptized (Acts 10:48) had all who heard his Gospel message, and had then received the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:47). These same people are also said to have previously engaged in speaking in tongues. Minta also points to the household of Lydia as containing only adults.⁸⁶ He explains

⁸² Interview with Otoo Addo, District Financial Secretary, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁸³ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁸⁴ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, Elder, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁸⁵ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

⁸⁶ Interview with Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

that as an unmarried business woman, her household would most probably be filled with women business associates as was the Mediterranean cultural norm. He went on to explain that a careful review of household baptism in the New Testament confirms that those who were baptized were morally competent.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter has facilitated a dialogue between proponents of infant baptism and resource person from the Church of Pentecost. The views of each faction have been placed side by side. The subsequent chapter concludes the study with summary of findings, general conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter examined the theological arguments put forward in defense of infant baptism and the Pentecostal response to those arguments. This chapter however, finalizes the study with summary of findings, a general conclusions and recommendations.

5.2 Summary of Findings

The main purpose of this research is to examine the response of the Church of Pentecost to the practice of infant baptism. The study employed the phenomenological approach using both primary and secondary data sources. Information was sourced from Pastors, elders, deacons, deaconesses as well as members in the Church of Pentecost. It was observed that the Church of Pentecost considers baptism as a sacrament and an initiation into the universal, invisible church as well as the local, visible church. The Church is very meticulous about baptism because it is regarded as a direct command of Jesus. Only baptism by immersion using the Trinitarian formulae is the acceptable to the church.

As stipulated in the constitution of the Church of Pentecost, baptism is only for those who are of the age of accountability and who freely request baptism on the basis of their response to Jesus Christ in faith. According to the standard of Church, only members who are thirteen years and above are considered fit enough to make the reasonable decision on their own. As a result the Church of Pentecost frowns on the practice infant baptism.

It was observed that, proponents of infant baptism heavily depends on the historical writings of church fathers to prove the apostolicity of the practice. Thus whereas there are no direct reference to infant baptism in the New Testament, there are many references to it in the writings of early church father. On this particular point the Church of Pentecost holds that it is scripture that forms the basis of church doctrine and practices of the church, as a result, the lack of biblical precedence is enough to invalidate the practice.

It was also observed that proponents of infant baptism compares the circumcision in the Old Testament and baptism in the New Testament. On the basis on some Pauline assertions, they argue that baptism has replaced circumcision in the New Testament. And if children and infant were circumcised in the old covenant, then it follows logically that infants can be baptized. They further argue that the object of the great commission encompasses all nations in this world. For the fact that every nation is made up persons regardless of age, then infants are also object of the great commission. The last biblical argument captured in favor of infant baptism is the household argument. Proponents of infant baptism claim that if entire household were baptized on many occasions in the book of Acts, then it follows logically that children in those households were also baptized.

The Pentecostal response to these arguments is in two main fold. In the first place the Church of Pentecost admit that infants are part of the 'all nations' being referred to in the great commission and the homes in which household baptism took place. However, the New Testament format for salvation reveals that children were omitted from baptism. All the new birth examples in the book of Acts start with evangelization or preaching of the gospel, and the development of faith in response to the gospel and then baptism. The Church holds that never in any case did baptism precede faith in the story

of the apostles. For this reason the Church is more than convinced that there is no trace of infant baptism in scripture. Moreover, upon a thorough scrutiny of the biblical argument that have been advanced in favor of infant baptism, the Church observes those such arguments are based on assumptions rather than facts or explicit scriptural reference. It is on the basis of these that the Church of Pentecost is firm in its stance to baptize only person who are mature enough to profess personal faith in Christ Jesus.

5.3 Conclusion

On the basis of the discussion in this research, it can be concluded that issues related baptism will continues to generate heated debates among denomination. The argument about the proper subject of baptism will certainly linger on. Even among Pentecostal churches there is a considerable difference in the way baptism is treated. One of the primary causes of the dilemma is the fact that the reference to scriptures on baptism only describe events about baptism but does not prescribe how to baptize.

The Church of Pentecost is however, very sure that its doctrine and practice of baptism is based solely on scripture, as there are explicit scriptural references to the several New Testament texts. As clear examples set by the apostle's involved personal faith and repentance before baptism, the Church of Pentecost is firm on their stance that infant's baptism is unscriptural.

5.4 Recommendations

Base on the research findings the researchers wish to make the following recommendations:

- The researchers recommend that further studies be done on the effect of baptismal difference on the unity of churches. Rebaptism is considered by many

scholars as serious issues as baptism is considered as the symbol of Christian unity.⁸⁷

- The researchers also recommend that further studies be done on how churches can reach a consensus or compromise, so that they can work together to advance the kingdom of God. Such a research can capture the role that ecumenical council in Ghana including the Ghana Council of Pentecostal Churches and the Christian Council can play in forging unity among denominations in the light of baptismal differences.
- Apart from the Church of Pentecost, there are many other Pentecostal churches that baptizes by immersion. To ensure unity in the body of Christ, it is recommended for the Church of Pentecost to embrace all previously baptised persons who decide to join from other churches.

⁸⁷ Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 1030.

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APPENDIX 1

PERSONALITIES INTERVIEWED

Elder Annorh Wiafe, F. K. Amful memorial Temple, Atimatim.

Elder Bright Acheampong, Mount Oilves Assembly, Gyinase.

Elder Felix Opoku, F. K. Amful memorial Temple, Atimatim.

Otoo Addo, District Financial Secretary, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

Rev Manansi Minta, District Minister, Atimatim Church of Pentecost.

Stephen Boadi, Mount Oilves Assembly, Gyinase.

APPENDIX 2

PENTECOSTAL RESPONSE TO THE PRACTICE OF INFANT BAPTISM: A CASE STUDY OF THE CHURCH OF PENTECOST

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Dear Rev./Mr/Mrs.....

I am a final year student of Christian Service University College. Kumasi.

I am working on Pentecostal Response of Infant Baptism: A case study of the Church of Pentecost. I therefore plead on your indulgence to provide me with the right answers to the following questions.

PART 1

1. Gender a) Male [☐] b) Female [☐]
2. Age range a) Below 30 [☐] b) above 30 [☐]
3. Educational level
 - a) Without formal education [☐]
 - b) Basic Education [☐]
 - c) Secondary High [☐]
 - d) Technical vocational [☐]
 - e) Tertiary [☐]
4. What is the name of your local Church?
.....
5. Do you hold any leadership position in your local Church?
.....

6. Have you been baptized? If yes, when and where were you baptized?

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7. What lessons were you taken through before you were baptized?

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8. At what age were you baptized?

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9. Is age an important factor in administering baptism?

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10. Does your local Church baptize children

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11. What is the suitable age for baptism

.....

12. Why is baptism not allowed in your Church

.....

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13. What are biblical basis for the rejection of infant baptism?

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14. What happens to members who were baptized in other denominations?

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15. Is baptism crucial for a person's salvation?

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16. What is the proper mode for baptism?

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