

Appendix D

Early Church Fathers on Baptism

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The following table identifies the extra-biblical writings of the early church fathers cited throughout this book. These texts reflect the beliefs and practices of churches closest to the apostles. While none of these works are canonical, they provide invaluable historical testimony. Each one shows how the earliest Christians understood baptism, not as a mere symbol, but as the decisive act of forgiveness, rebirth, and entrance into life in Christ. Together, they demonstrate that the earliest church consistently treated baptism as effectual, never optional, and never reduced to a post-conversion ritual.

From the Didache in the late first century to Cyprian in the mid-third, the witness is strikingly consistent. Every voice affirms baptism as the decisive act by which sins are forgiven, believers are reborn, and entry into Christ's body is granted. None of these writings treats baptism as a mere symbol for those already saved. Instead, they echo the New Testament pattern: faith responds to grace through belief, repentance, confession, and baptism. The unanimity of this testimony across regions and generations shows that the earliest church understood baptism as effectual, not optional. This conviction was rooted in apostolic teaching and faithfully preserved by those who followed.

These works come from Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Smyrna, Carthage, Syria, Palestine, and Gaul, spanning the decades between the close of the apostolic age and the middle of the third century. Despite their diversity, they display a consistent understanding of what occurs in baptism and how the earliest believers entered the Christian life.

To make their testimony comparable, the table uses five categories: *Regeneration*, *Forgiveness*, *Holy Spirit Reception*, *Church Incorporation*, and the *Conversion Mandate*. The early writers use varied expressions for these same realities. Terms such as *rebirth*, *being made alive*, *illumination*, and *renewal* correspond to Regeneration. Words like *washing*, *purification*, *remission*, and even *grace* itself reflect Forgiveness. Language similar to *sealing*, *anointing*, and *receiving the Spirit* speaks to Holy Spirit Reception. Descriptions such as being *added*, *joined*, or *entering the kingdom* belong to Church Incorporation. The final category, Conversion Mandate, indicates that an author treats baptism as the required act by which a person enters the Christian life. When these early witnesses describe baptism as the moment of new life, washing, Spirit-gift, or entrance into God's people, they identify it as the decisive act of obedient faith God commands in conversion.

Each entry in the table is marked as Explicit, Implied, Indirect, or N/A.

- *Explicit* means the doctrinal effect is directly stated in connection with baptism.

- *Implied* means the doctrine is present through imagery or argument.
- *Indirect* means the work shows baptism functioning as the entry boundary of the Church, even without doctrinal exposition.
- *N/A* indicates no conversion-level baptism teaching.

Taken together, these voices from different regions, decades, and pastoral settings show a unified pattern. The earliest Christians describe baptism as the moment of regeneration, forgiveness, Spirit-reception, and incorporation, and as the God-given mandate that completes a believer's entrance into Christ.

For a comprehensive survey of patristic baptismal theology, see Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009).

Table 13. Writings of the Early Church on Baptism — Enhanced Edition

This edition expands the printed Table 13 with three additional reference columns — Source of Dating, Translation Source, and Author — for readers who want to trace the scholarship behind each entry.

Work	Date (AD)	Regeneration	Forgiveness	Holy Spirit Reception	Church Incorporation	Conversion Mandate	Source of Dating	Translation Source	Author
Didache 7	80-120	n/a	n/a	n/a	Indirect	Explicit	Jonathan A. Draper, <i>The Didache in Modern Research</i> (Leiden: Brill, 1996).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Anonymous
Epistle of Barnabas 11	80-130	Implied	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Michael W. Holmes, <i>The Apostolic Fathers</i> , 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Anonymous
1 Clement	95-96	n/a	n/a	n/a	Indirect	Implied	Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., <i>The Apostolic Fathers</i> , vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Clement of Rome
Ignatius of Antioch - Letters	107-110	n/a	n/a	n/a	Indirect	Implied	Bart D. Ehrman, ed. and trans., <i>The Apostolic Fathers</i> , vol. 1, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Ignatius of Antioch, Bishop and Martyr
Polycarp - Letter to the Philippians	110-135	n/a	n/a	n/a	Indirect	Implied	Michael W. Holmes, <i>The Apostolic Fathers</i> , 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Polycarp of Smyrna, Bishop and Martyr
Shepherd of Hermas - Mandate 4	140-150	Implied	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Carolyn Osiek, <i>The Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary</i> , Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Hermas (Christian writer in Rome)
Shepherd of Hermas - Similitude 9	140-150	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Explicit	Explicit	Carolyn Osiek, <i>The Shepherd of Hermas: A Commentary</i> , Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999).	The Apostolic Fathers, ed. and trans. J. B. Lightfoot and J. R. Harmer (London: Macmillan, 1891).	Hermas (Christian writer in Rome)
Justin Martyr - First Apology 61	155-160	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Sara Parvis and Paul Foster, eds., <i>Justin Martyr and His Worlds</i> (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing, 1885-1887).	Justin Martyr, Christian Philosopher and Apologist
Theophilus of Antioch - To Autolycus 2.16	180-185	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Robert M. Grant, <i>Greek Apologists of the Second Century</i> (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1988).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Theophilus of Antioch, Bishop
Irenaeus - Against Heresies	180-200	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Adelin Rousseau and Louis Doutreleau, <i>Irenée de Lyon: Contre les hérésies, Sources Chrétiennes</i> (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 1965-1982).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Irenaeus of Lyons, Bishop and Martyr
Irenaeus - Fragment 34	180-200	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Discussed in <i>Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus in critical editions such as Sources Chrétiennes, Éditions du Cerf.</i>	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Irenaeus of Lyons
Clement of Alexandria - Protrepticus 11	180-190	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Otto Stählin, <i>Clemens Alexandrinus</i> , vol. 1 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1905).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Clement of Alexandria, Head of the Catechetical School
Clement - Paedagogus 1.6	198-202	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Otto Stählin, <i>Clemens Alexandrinus</i> (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1905-1909).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Clement of Alexandria
Clement - Stromata Book 4	200-210	Implied	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Otto Stählin, <i>Clemens Alexandrinus</i> (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs Verlag, 1905-1909).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Clement of Alexandria
Tertullian - On Baptism	198-203	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Explicit	Ernest Evans, <i>Tertullian's Homily on Baptism</i> (London: SPCK, 1984).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Tertullian of Carthage, Presbyter
Hippolytus - Apostolic Tradition 21-22	~215	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Explicit	Alastair Stewart-Sykes, <i>Hippolytus: On the Apostolic Tradition</i> , rev. ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2001/2015).	Burton Scott Easton, trans., <i>The Apostolic Tradition</i> (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1934; public domain).	Hippolytus of Rome, Presbyter (traditionally attributed)
Origen - Homilies on Leviticus 8.3	238-244	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Explicit	Gary Wayne Barkley, trans., <i>Origen: Homilies on Leviticus</i> , Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Origen of Alexandria and Caesarea
Origen - Commentary on Romans 5.9	244-248	Explicit	Explicit	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Thomas P. Schewk, trans., <i>Origen: Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans</i> , Fathers of the Church (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2001).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Origen
Cyprian - Epistle 69	253	Implied	Explicit	Implied	Explicit	Explicit	J. Patout Burns, <i>Cyprian the Bishop</i> (London: Routledge, 2002).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Cyprian of Carthage, Bishop and Martyr
Cyprian - Epistles 71-73	253-254	Implied	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	Explicit	J. Patout Burns, <i>Cyprian the Bishop</i> (London: Routledge, 2002).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Cyprian of Carthage
Cyprian - On the Unity of the Church	251	Implied	Implied	Implied	Explicit	Explicit	J. Patout Burns, <i>Cyprian the Bishop</i> (London: Routledge, 2002).	Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (public domain).	Cyprian of Carthage

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