

# Evaluation Practice: Baptism

**‘Christians should not accept the practice of infant baptism.’**

Do you agree? Show that you have considered more than one point of view.

## **For ...**

the practice of believer’s baptism, with its emphasis on the **catechumenate**, is more in line with early Christianity

why should people be forced into a religion? God respects human freedom; Jesus preached the precondition of repentance and conversion of heart (*metanoia*) before a person could receive the Kingdom reality in their heart; all this seems irrelevant to a child before the age of reason

often, the huge religious significance of baptism is lost; too many people think of the church as a place to visit at ‘hatching, matching and despatching’ times

many parents make promises at their child’s baptism, promises which the parents are unlikely to keep - the Catholic Church’s law states that there must be *‘a well-founded hope that the child will be brought up in the Catholic religion’*

many infants will not be reared in the faith into which they were baptised; they become ‘automatically lapsed’; this creates ‘nominal’ (*in name only*) Catholics, and promotes the view of Church as a ‘dead place’ rather than a living community

## **Against ...**

Christ died for all people, young and old; his grace should be available to all; baptismal grace works before the child’s awareness, removing the stain of Original Sin and planting God’s life within

God’s grace is **prevenient** - God acts before our awareness of his action; a child becomes a **new creation** at baptism - our ‘coming into being’ as a new Christian parallels our ‘coming into being’ as a human; both rely ultimately on God’s loving initiative rather than our choice

why should infants be deprived of the life of grace that baptism inaugurates? **not** to baptise an infant is in itself a **choice made by the parents** for the infant

parents have the right and duty to raise their children in the faith; it is entirely natural for parents to speak for their child until such time as the child can speak for itself; a family is **not** a democracy - it is built on love and authority

initiation into the Jewish faith occurs at infancy - notably by circumcision of the boys; in the early Church it was not only adults who were initiated into the Christian community but whole households, including, we guess, infants

though we entrust those infants who have died before being baptised to God’s mercy, all bereaved parents who are believers would feel comforted by the fact of their child dying as a Christian

By now, you should be more confident in the method of evaluative writing. Don't be afraid to argue a view, and take into account contrary views. Remember, you must deal with religious beliefs that underlie the issue. An example of an opening is included below.

*I don't agree with the statement. In principle, parents make all sorts of choices for a child, choices they hope are for the best. Why should this principle not apply to religion? Of course, some would argue that one's faith is a matter of free choice, and, ultimately, this is true. However, to postpone baptism is in reality a choice made by the parents for the child. Believing parents cannot be expected to consider postponement a **better** choice ...*

**Now have a go at the evaluation yourself.**