

RELIGION: *STUDIES OF RELIGION*

Identify the importance of Baptism in Christianity: a ritual to mark the inclusion of a new member to the Christian community.

Baptism marks the admission of an individual into most Christian Churches and helps one achieve salvation. For this reason, it is a rite of initiation that has great significance for the newly baptized as it is now implied that the individual's life must be in keeping with their commitment. Generally, baptism is defined as the purification by water and a confession of faith. However, the physical nature of washing can vary between denominations. For example, Catholics baptize children whereas the Baptist's baptize adults in believer's baptism, allowing for the informed agreement and conscious decision of the new member into the Body of Christ.

Baptism is also significant for the whole Christian community as the community now has the responsibility to spiritually guide and nurture the new adherent. Furthermore, the ritual of baptism renews the and enriches the faith of the entire congregation as the community is called to reflect upon their own faith. By taking part in the ritual of baptism, the individual and community undergo purification, conversion and commitment to Jesus Christ.

Outline the significance of the use of water for the Christian ceremony.

Water has been a long standing symbol of purification and cleansing. In a Christian ceremony of baptism, water represents the cleansing of one's sins and of salvation. Hence, Christians believe that they will be granted eternal life in Heaven. The life-giving water is indicative of Christ as the giver of new life and is significant as it allows individuals to find meaning. In terms of the community, the use of water for all adherents is significant as it demonstrates the equality of all people as seen through God's eyes. This sense of unity reminds believers that salvation is community orientated. The threefold pouring of water (Catholicism) or full immersion (Orthodox) reminds Christians of the Mystery of the Trinity. The passing in and out of water symbolizes the Christian belief in the death and resurrection of Christ. In a Catholic service the priest will say, "You created man in your own likeness: cleanse him from sin in a new birth to innocence by water and the spirit". As a result, Christians die with Christ in sin but rise with Him in new life through the symbol of water and the strength of the Holy Spirit.