

Concordia Seminary - Saint Louis

## Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary

---

Bachelor of Divinity

Concordia Seminary Scholarship

---

4-15-1939

### The Doctrine of Holy Baptism in the Pauline Epistles

Arlo Mueller

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, ir\_muellera@csl.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv>



Part of the [Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons](#)

---

#### Recommended Citation

Mueller, Arlo, "The Doctrine of Holy Baptism in the Pauline Epistles" (1939). *Bachelor of Divinity*. 33.  
<https://scholar.csl.edu/bdiv/33>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Concordia Seminary Scholarship at Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. It has been accepted for inclusion in Bachelor of Divinity by an authorized administrator of Scholarly Resources from Concordia Seminary. For more information, please contact [seitzw@csl.edu](mailto:seitzw@csl.edu).

**THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY BAPTISM IN THE  
PAULINE EPISTLES**

**A thesis presented to the  
Faculty of Concordia Theological Seminary  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Divinity**

**by  
Arlo M. Mueller**

**Concordia Seminary**

**April 15, 1938**

Approved by

W. Engelder  
A. M. Reinwald

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### Introduction

**The Lutheran Doctrine of Holy Baptism as Revealed in God's Holy Word  
(Lutheran Confessions; Lutheran exegetes and dogmaticians)**

What constitutes Baptism

The Objectives of Baptism

Baptism and Its Effects

The Necessity of Infant Baptism

The Efficacy of Baptism

Proof-passages Supporting the Lutheran Confessions

**A Review of the Passages in the Pauline Epistles Treating of Holy Baptism**

Romans 6,3-6

1 Cor. 1,13-17

10,2

12,13

15,29

Galatians 3,25-27

Colossians 2,10-12

Titus 3,3-7

Hebrews 10,19-23

**Errors of Enthusiasm Which Oppose the Lutheran Doctrine**

Denial of the Word and Sacraments as the True Means of Grace

Separation of the Work of the Holy Spirit From the Means of Grace

The Maintenance of Seven Sacraments

The (Partial) Dependence of the Efficacy of the Sacraments Upon  
the Ministrant

Mechanical Interpretation of Grace in the Sacraments

Limitation of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism

The Necessity of Immersion as the only Proper Mode

The Efficacy of Baptism Limited to Original Sin and Actual Sins  
Committed before Baptism

Indelible Character Implanted by Baptism

Baptism through a Substitute

## THE DOCTRINE OF HOLY BAPTISM IN THE PAULINE EPISTLES

The purpose of this treatise is to show, primarily, that the doctrine which the Confessional Lutheran Church has taught concerning the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is the Scriptural doctrine as taught in the Pauline Epistles, and that the various errors of Enthusiasm on this point must be rejected as conflicting with the clear teachings of Paul, the great apostle.

Very frequently Enthusiasm, in the defence of its errors, resorts to the writings of St. Paul to prove its false tenets. The apostle, it is claimed, does not rate Baptism very highly, for not only does he treat it in very few places, relatively, but he "even makes light of it in unmistakable words", for example in writing to the Corinthians: "I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I baptized in my own name. And I also baptized the household of Stephana; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel" (1 Cor. 1,14-17).

This claim is made especially by the Baptists in their attempt to disprove the doctrine that Baptism is a means of grace and therefore necessary for salvation, especially as far as infants are concerned. The constant opposition of Enthusiasm to Baptism as an efficacious means of grace by ancient and modern Enthusiasts has resulted in this that also in other enthusiastic church circles, which do not fully agree with the extreme views of the Baptist groups, but regard Baptism in general merely as a praiseworthy church rite, Baptism is today being neglected, and thousands of children grow up in our American communities without having received the blessings which God means to bestow upon sinners through this Holy Sacrament. This dissertation, therefore, is not only important because of its contents, but also because of its timeliness.

In presenting the doctrinal material and evidence, we shall set forth:

1) The Lutheran doctrine of Holy Baptism as presented, on the basis of Scripture, in our Lutheran Confessions and by our Lutheran Church teachers,

2) A thorough review and study of the passages in the Pauline Epistles treating of Baptism, and

3) The errors which Enthusiasm in ancient and modern times has opposed to the Lutheran doctrine of Baptism.

The central point in the treatise remains, of course, the discussion and application of St. Paul's special teachings on the doctrine of Holy Baptism in his great Epistles.

## I

### THE LUTHERAN DOCTRINE OF HOLY BAPTISM

In setting forth the Lutheran doctrine of Holy Baptism we shall not touch upon every phase of it, since this is not demanded by the special purpose of the treatise, but we shall emphasize the main points that have been the basis of controversy between the Lutherans and the Enthusiasts.

Of the greatest importance among these is the question as to the nature and purpose of Holy Baptism, or, stated more simply, what Baptism really is. On this point, as everywhere else, our Confessions speak very plainly. Already the Augsburg Confession decides the whole issue when it very plainly declares that "the Sacraments were ordained not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them".<sup>1</sup> If the Sacraments are signs and testimonies of the will of God toward us to create and confirm faith, then it follows that Baptism is an efficacious means of grace,

---

1) Triglot, Art. XIII, p. 49

and not merely an outward sign or symbol, as Enthusiasm teaches. This truth is clearly brought out in Art. IX, in which it is said that Baptism "is necessary to salvation"<sup>2)</sup> It is understood, of course, that this necessity is not absolute, but one of obeying God's command and receiving His promise. The Apology clears the matter completely in the statement: "Therefore it is necessary to baptize little children, that the promise of salvation may be applied to them, according to Christ's command, Matt. 28, 19: 'Baptize all nations'" <sup>3.)</sup>

In the Smalcald Articles, Luther, having in mind a final, forceful testimony against the papacy, speaks very strongly on the essence and objective of Holy Baptism. Writing of the subject in general <sup>4)</sup> he first says that the Gospel gives us counsel and aid against sin, not merely in one way (for God is superabundantly rich in His grace), but in many ways; not merely through the spoken Word, but also "through Baptism" <sup>5.)</sup> This statement supports those of the Augsburg Confession and the Apology which declare that Baptism is a means of grace; for if it gives us counsel and aid against sin, then it is certainly more than a mere symbol. However, Luther, in an article especially written on the subject <sup>6)</sup> speaks still more clearly on the nature and purpose of this Sacrament when he says that "Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water, commanded by his institution; or, as Paul says, "a washing in the Word" <sup>7).</sup> At the same time Luther rejects the error of "Thomas Aquinas and the monastic preachers" that "God has implanted in the water a spiritual power, which through the water washes away sin". Luther's contention is that Baptism washes away

- 
- 2) Triglot, p. 47
  - 3) Triglot, p. 345
  - 4) Art. IV, "Of the Gospel"
  - 5) Triglot, p. 491
  - 6) Art. V, "Of Baptism"
  - 7) Triglot, p. 491

sin because of the divine Gospel promise which is in and with the water in Baptism In his Small Catechism Luther states this clearly in the well-known words: "It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such Word of God in the water...." 8)

Luther, however, expresses these truths concerning the nature and purpose of Baptism still more clearly in his Large Catechism. Here Luther, writing against his enthusiastic opponents for ordinary Christians, declares among many other like expressions: "It is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy and blessed water, and in whatever other terms we can praise it--all on account of the Word, which is a holy, heavenly Word, that no one can sufficiently extol, for it has and is able to do all that God is and can do, since it has all the virtue and power of God comprised in it". Therefore Baptism must not be regarded according to the course, external mask, as we regard the shell of a nut, but as the Word of God is included therein".... "The water and the Word must not be separated from one another and parted. For if the Word is separated from it, the water is the same as that which the servant cooks and may indeed be called a bath-keeper's baptism. But when it is added, as God ordained, it is a Sacrament and is called a Christ-Baptism"... "The power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely, to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with Him forever"... Faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water. For since these blessings are here presented and promised in the words in and with the water, they cannot be received in any other way than by believing them with the heart. Without faith, it profits nothing, notwithstanding it is in itself a divine, superabundant treasure"... "Baptism is not our work, but God's"....

---

8) Triglot, p. 551

God's works, however, are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude but demand faith, for without faith they cannot be apprehended"... "Thus we must regard Baptism and make it profitable to ourselves, that when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say: "Nevertheless, I am baptized; but if I am baptized, it is promised me that I shall be saved and have eternal life both in soul and body." 9)

Our Confessions thus regard Baptism as a true Sacrament, or means of grace, which must be highly regarded and esteemed, because it is a washing of regeneration and thus a treasure presented to us by God. 10) Because Baptism is water connected with Christ's saving Gospel, our Confessions ascribe to it the same blessings that are offered and imparted to men by the Gospel itself when used in its general way of proclamation. In Baptism we receive divine grace and forgiveness of sins, are given the Holy Ghost, put on Christ, enter into the church as believing members of Christ's body, are freed from the guilt and punishment of original sin, are granted a new life, are delivered from death and the Devil, are made partakers of eternal life, become children of God, are enabled to crucify the Old Adam, etc. In short, whatever the divine Word does for our salvation, that also, in the same way and degree, Holy Baptism does, because the divine Word is in this washing of regeneration. 11) Baptism is therefore an efficacious means of grace which should not be neglected, but diligently and believingly used as God's most gracious gift given to us for our salvation.

Much attention is given in our Confessions to Infant Baptism. In his Large Catechism Luther advocates ~~the~~ the practice of Paedobaptism by three arguments:

1) by the fact that this Baptism has proved itself pleasing to God,

9) Triglot, pp. 737 ff.

10) cf. Triglot, pp. 309, 551, 741

11) cf. Triglot, pp. 309, 743, 907, 749, 113, 751, 707, etc.



since He in general has sanctified and given His Holy Spirit to those who were thus baptized;

2) because God has commanded the Baptism of infants in His general command to baptize all nations;

3) because Baptism is a divine ordinance, which does not depend upon our worthy reception, but upon the divine institution for its offer of grace and forgiveness. These gifts, of course, only those obtain who receive it in true faith. The Augsburg Confession states expressly that "children are to be baptized, who, being offered to God through Baptism, are received into God's grace" 12). The Apology bases its insistence upon Infant Baptism chiefly on God's command to baptize all nations and on His manifest approval of the Baptism of little children. 13) The Smalcald Articles urge the Baptism of little children, because they belong to the promised redemption made through Christ, and the Church should administer it to them. 14) Consistently, our Confessions reject the error of the Anabaptists, who deny Infant Baptism because "children who are not baptized are not sinners are not sinners before God, but righteous and innocent, who in their innocency, because they have not yet attained their reason, are saved without Baptism (which, according to their statement, they do not need). Therefore they reject the entire doctrine concerning original sin and what belongs to it". 15) In the Thorough Declaration this anti-thesis is expressed thus: (We reject) "that children who are not baptized are not sinners before God, but righteous and innocent, and thus are saved in their innocency without Baptism, which they do not need. Accordingly they deny and reject the entire doctrine concerning original sin and what belongs to it". 16)

While our Confessions, without any effort at systematizing the doctrine, thus simply present the teaching of Baptism in its essential

---

12) Art. IX, p. 47

13) of. Apology, p. 245

14) Triglot, p. 493

15) Formula of Concord, Art. XII, Epitome, Triglot, p. 839

16) Triglot, p. 1699

Scriptural truths, namely, its divine institution, nature, benefit, right use, and significance, our dogmatists discuss for greater clearness and preciseness of expression and presentation such points as their controversy with the Calvinistic, Baptist, and Anabaptist enthusiasts made necessary, though the five points just mentioned remained fundamental also to them. In particular, they rejected also the enthusiastic distinction made between the internal and external Baptism, declaring on the basis of Scripture that the two are but one act of the Holy Ghost, who regenerated the person through the divine Word of Baptism, and not, as the enthusiasts claim, apart from that Word by immediate action. The question whether there is in Baptism both a terrestrial and celestial matter caused much debate among the Lutheran theologians, some claiming that the heavenly matter is the divine Word, or the Holy Trinity, or the Holy Spirit, etc., while others again asserted that it is best not to speak of a materia caelestis in Holy Baptism 17). With regard to the blessed effects or fruits of Baptism, these are described in various terms as ablutio, "washing away", imputatio justitiae Christi, "imputation of Christ's righteousness", regeneratio sive renovatio, "regeneration or renovation", adoptio, "adoption", fidei et gratiae evangelicae oblatio, "the offering of faith and Gospel grace", collatio, in the case of children, "bestowal", obsignatio, in the case of adults, "sealing", though really these terms denote no actual differences in doctrine, their common doctrine being that Baptism saves us by regeneration and justification.

Against the Romanistic error our dogmatists declared that Baptism frees us from both the guilt and dominion of sin, though it does not destroy the sinful flesh itself with its evil desires or fleshly lusts, for which reason it is the source of all actual sins. The benefit fruit of Baptism is received through faith in the Gospel

---

17) to which Dr. Pieper also agrees in "Christliche Dogmatik", Vol. III, p. 321 f.

promise of Baptism, but this faith saves not as a good work, but merely as the receiving means (medium,      ). The Baptism of children was more clearly motivated and justified by the fact that according to God's Word, also children can believe 18). In general, the argument of out dogmaticians is based upon the following scriptural truths: All children are sinners and need regeneration 19). In addition, Christ very clearly demanded that they should be brought to Him to be blessed and saved 20); and since Baptism is the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost 21), they must be baptized. The faith also of children is active trust in the promise of Christ, though it is impossible for human reason to understand how little children can believe, yet not more so than how sleeping adults, or adults in a coma, can believe.

Emergency Baptism, which has been rejected by the Reformed, is justified and urged by our teachers, just because Baptism is an efficacious means of grace that must not be denied to any infant offered to us for Baptism, though in the end, not the deprivation of, but the contempt of Baptism condemns. With regard to the children of the ungodly dying without Baptism, no special comfort can be held out 22), but the infants of Christians, removed by God before Baptism can take place, should be commended to God's grace in Christ Jesus who is able to sanctify sinners without means 23), though we Christians are bound by God to the ordained means of grace.

Baptism must be performed according to the institution of the Savior, so that children must be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. No substitute for water is allowed in Baptism, we being bound to those earthly elements which Christ Himself used, since otherwise the entire Sacrament would become uncertain. The Baptism by the antitrinitarian churches, though retaining the sound

---

18) Matt. 18, 6  
 19) John 3, 5. 6.  
 20) Mark 10, 13ff.  
 21) Tit. 3, 5 ff.  
 22) Eph. 2, 12

of the words, actually reject the doctrine of the Word of God and therefore have no Baptism. The Baptism of hypocritical ministers serving Christian congregations is of course valid, since the officiating pastor is acting in the name of the congregation.

Repentance is nothing else than the penitent person's return to the baptismal covenant, which always stands unbroken on God's part, though by our transgressions we sinners may break it on our part. For this reason also the repetition of Baptism is not necessary, especially since there is no command and no example for such repetition of Baptism in Scripture. Baptism signifies that by daily repentance we drown the Old Adam with its evil lusts and daily arise in newness of life, so that Baptism obligates us to true faith and holy life.

These are the main points of doctrine which have been stressed by our theologians against errorists of every kind, though essentially our teachers do not present any teaching beyond that which is taught in the Confessions 23).

The question now confronting us, is, whether the doctrine of Baptism offered by our Lutheran Confessions and dogmaticians can adequately be substantiated by clear passages in the Pauline Epistles. From the very start, we must remember that the limits established by the thesis force us to ignore a great number of passages in which the Lutheran doctrine of Holy Baptism is securely rooted. A brief survey of such passages may be given to point out the fact that Holy Scripture indeed offers a most extensive presentation of the doctrine of Holy Baptism. Mark 7, 4; Acts 22, 16, and Matt. 3, 11 thus prove that any form of applying the water to the person is valid.

---

23) Cf. Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, pp. 486 ff; Krauth, The Conservative Reformation, pp. 427 ff; Engelder, Doctrinal Notes; Schmid, The Doctrinal Theology of the Ev. Luth. Church, pp. 536 ff; Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, Vol. 3; Hase, Hutterus Redivivus, pp. 252 ff; Luthardt, Compendium der Dogmatik, pp. 346 ff.

Matt. 28, 19. 20 shows that the water is to be applied not to inanimate things, such as bells, churches, vessels, etc., but to living, human persons. Acts 8, 35. 38; John 1, 31; 3, 5. 21, and Acts 10, 47 prove that the external element of Baptism is water, and not any substitute. John 3, 5. 6; Mark 10, 14; Acts 2, 39; 16, 15; and 16, 33 are valuable for the proof of infant Baptism. The command to baptize is given both in Mark 16, 15. 16 and Matt. 28, 19, and shows also that the baptizing is to be done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. This passage, and Matt. 3, 16. 17; John 3, 5, and I John 5, 6, prove that the Triune God is effectually present with the water connected with the sacramental word, and that, in particular, it is the Holy Ghost who sanctifies us through this Holy Sacrament. Acts 22, 16; 2, 38; Luke 3, 3; I Pet. 3, 21, and Acts 8, 35. 38 show that in Baptism the Holy Ghost efficaciously offers to the baptized the gifts of His grace, operating toward their acceptance, as in infants, or toward perseverance in and greater assurance of their possession, as in adults who have been previously regenerated by the Word 24). Luke 7, 30 proves that those who refuse to be baptized reject the counsel of God against themselves, for which reason they by their unbelief commit a damnable sin. We must therefore forego some of the most important Scripture passages treating of Holy Baptism. Nevertheless, by our investigation of the Pauline Epistles, we hope to point out that St. Paul in various passages has clearly taught the fundamental doctrines of Holy Baptism, namely, those concerning its nature, efficacy, significance, and right use, and thus it will be seen that our Confessions teach nothing but Scriptural doctrine.

---

24) Cf. Graebner, *Outlines of Doctrinal Theology*, pp. 188 ff.

between Jews and Gentiles. Therefore this Epistle is included for the sake of completeness, especially because the passage stresses a doctrinal point which should not be overlooked. 25).

A. ROM. 6,3-6

"Or do you <sup>not</sup> know that whoever we baptized into Christ Jesus, we baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him through (by) Baptism into death, in order that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, thus also we shall walk in newness of life. For if conjoined we have become in the likeness of His death, we shall be also (in the likeness) of His rising up. Knowing this, that our Old Man is crucified with Him, in order that the body of sin might be destroyed, that we no longer serve (in) sin."

This passage must be noted as one of the most prominent in the Pauline Epistles treating the doctrine of Holy Baptism. The Epistle to the Romans is primarily a doctrinal discussion, yet this special instruction of the apostle concerning Holy Baptism is given rather incidentally, namely, to urge the Christians at Rome to discontinue their old life of sin and to walk in holiness. In the previous chapters the apostle had treated of the great extent of divine grace, which abounded much more than did sin. 26). That does not mean, however, that Christians may now sin freely in order that divine grace may abound the more in God's consistent remission of their transgressions 27). "God forbid!", the apostle replies to this thought; for, as he argues further, Christians are dead to sin so that they may no longer live therein 28). Believers in Christ have been freed not only from the punishment, but also from the power of sin, and therefore they must overcome sin in their new life of holiness.

But just how have believers become dead to sin? That question

---

25) Cf. Matthew Henry's Commentary, Hebrews.  
 26) Cf. 5, 20  
 27) Cf. 6, 1  
 28) Cf. 6, 2

St. Paul answers properly in vv. 5-6. His reply is: Christians have become dead to sin by being baptized into Jesus Christ, because by that holy act they were baptized into His death. The clear meaning of those words is that Christians are baptized with reference to Christ (eis) in the sense that through Baptism they are intimately "united with Him in the likeness of His death" 29). The words  $\epsilon\upsilon\mu\eta\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$   $\tau\epsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  really signify "we have become planted together", which denotes the closest possible uniting with Christ. But as Christians through Baptism were planted together, or, more closely united with Christ's death, so also through Baptism they were buried with Him into death. Both aorists  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  and  $\epsilon\upsilon\tau\epsilon\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\theta\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  describe the action as accomplished once for all and therefore as complete. In that very moment when the Christians at Rome were baptized, they were also baptized into Christ's death and were also buried with Him 30). Verse 4a does not add an entirely new thought, though it completes and emphasizes the first idea of union with Christ, which St. Paul stresses. In short, the spiritual union of Baptized believers with Christ's death through Baptism is complete; by Baptism Christians have died with Christ and have been buried with Him. Therefore are they free from sin.

While 4a, however, is not essentially different from the preceding thought, it mediates and motivates the new thought which the apostle urges in the next statement. Christians were buried with Christ to rise with Christ. In other words, as through Baptism we have participation with Christ's death and burial, so also with Christ's resurrection. When Christ rose from the dead, He left the sins put upon Him by the Father as our Substitute, in the grave and arose in perfect newness of life, namely, in His state of exaltation. So also Christians, having through Baptism been planted together with Christ in the like-

---

29) Cf. v. 5

30) Cf. v. 4

ness of His death, are also planted together with Christ in the likeness of His resurrection 31). In short, their dying with Christ to sin, implies also their rising with Him to God in holiness. This thought is stressed still more by way of a final conclusion in v. 6, where, repeating the thought in v. 5 in its essential points, St. Paul remarks that through Baptism our old man was crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed and henceforth the believer should not serve sin.

The main argument of the apostle here in which we are interested, is that expressed in the statements that Baptized believers are baptized in Christ, are buried with Him by Baptism into death, and are implanted with Him also in the likeness of His resurrection. The suggestion of Baptists that Paul here urges immersion as the only proper mode of Baptism is trivial. The Critical and Explanatory Commentary on the Bible 32) remarks on this point: "Whether the mode of Baptism by immersion be alluded to in this verse, as a kind of symbolical burial and resurrection, does not seem to us of much consequence. Many interpreters think it is, and it may be so. But as it is not clear that Baptism in apostolic times was exclusively by immersion 33), so sprinkling and washing are indifferently used in the New Testament to express the cleansing efficacy of the blood of Jesus." On the statement: "We were baptized into His death" 34), this commentary remarks: "We were formerly entered and artioled to all the benefits and all the obligations of Christian discipleship in general, and of His death in particular." Meyer's Commentary remarks on v. 3: "We who through Baptism become those specifically belonging to Him, were brought through our Baptism into the fellowship of His death, so that we have a real share ethically in His death through the cessation of all our life for sin". He quotes approvingly Theodore of

---

31) Cf. v. 5

32) Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown

33) Cf. Acts 2, 41

34) Cf. v. 3



Mopsuestia: "Baptism makes us sharers of the death of Christ"; and Ambrosiaster: "As we are baptized, we die with Christ"; and Bengel: "It is the same as if in that moment Christ for such a person and such a person for Christ suffered, died, and was buried". Meyer then goes on to say: "In Baptism man receives forgiveness of sins through faith 35), justified by which he also becomes partaker of the virtue of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament unto new life (35). Stoeckhardt in his commentary writes:

"Und nun sind wir eben, weil auf Christum, auch auf seinen Tod getauft und also durch die Taufe seines Todes, seiner Erlösung, und zwar der Erlösung nicht nur von der Schuld, sondern auch von der Gewalt der Sünde, teilhaftig worden. Und so sind wir also, dioweil auf Christum und seinen Tod getauft, der Gewalt der Sünde entnommen. Dass wir nun aber mit Christo gestorben und begraben sind, hatte den Zweck, das war hierbei das Absehen Gottes, dass, wie Christus von den Toten auferweckt worden ist, also auch wir in Neuheit des Lebens wandeln. Dass wir in Neuheit des Lebens oder in einem neuen Leben wandeln, das war der finis ultimus. Das setzt aber voraus, dass wir in einem neuen Leben stehen. Wir Christen stehen seit unserer Taufe in einem neuen Leben." 37)

Other commentaries offer substantially the same exposition of this much discussed passage. The Hirschberger Bible says: "Wir sind durch die Taufe in die genaueste Gemeinschaft mit Christus gleichsam versenkt". The Weimar Bible says: "Wir sind in seinen Tod getauft, also, dass wir der Kraft seines Todes teilhaftig werden, nicht anders, als wenn wir selbst allbereit fuer die Sünde gestorben waeren. Durch solche Kraft des Todes Christi werden nicht allein unsere Sünden vergeben, sondern wir empfangen auch den heiligen Geist, welcher die Sünde in uns dämpft und toetet". Dr. Kretzmann asserts: "...Anyone baptized into the name of a person of the Godhead thereby became the property of the divine person indicated. Christ's salvation is our salvation, because we were baptized into His death".38)

Very clearly and thoroughly, St. Paul in Rom. 6, 3-6 teaches some most important truths concerning holy Baptism, indeed those very truths which our confessions emphasize with so much certainty. In the first

35) Cf. Acts 2, 38; 22, 16

36) Cf. Tit. 3, 5

37) Cf. Stoeckhardt, pp. 283 ff.

38) Popular Commentary, Vol. II, p. 30

place, St. Paul takes the administration of the Sacrament of Baptism for granted. Christians are to be baptized, and not only children, but adults also. Baptism therefore is highly important. It is a divine institution which the Church must observe. Baptism is not a mere sign or symbol, but an efficacious means of grace, as Paul here teaches. It does something valuable for the person who is baptized. It brings him into fellowship with Christ, in particular, with His death and resurrection. That means that Baptism offers and communicates all those gifts and blessings which Christ secured for sinful mankind through His holy suffering, dying, and rising again from the dead... "who was delivered for our offenses, and delivered again for our justification" 39). Baptism is therefore God's conferring means of grace to which is correlated faith as the receiving means of grace in the baptized person, by which he takes for himself that which is so graciously offered to him by God.

However, from this it follows that baptism has also a deep significance. It means that as Christ arose from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we baptized believers should walk in newness of life. All four points, therefore, which Luther in his Small Catechism emphasizes regarding Holy Baptism, can be proved from this passage. Baptism is not simpliciter aqua, as Luther says, otherwise it could not perform the miracle that it does. So it must be aqua divino mandato comprehensa et verbo Dei obsignata. So also it works forgiveness of sin, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare. It is understood, of course, that St. Paul did not take Baptism to work as by some sort of magic, but "through faith which trusts such word of God in the water," for in the preceding chapter he has set forth with great emphasis the doctrine of justification

---

39) Cf. Rom. 4, 25

by faith. 40)

Lastly, as St. Paul very clearly points out, Baptism "signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and again, a new man daily come forth and arise, who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever". In fact, this very truth Luther, in his "Where is this written?", proves from Romans, chapter 6, as we know from our early Christian instruction in the Catechism,

B. 1 COR. 1, 13-17; 10,2; 12, 13; 15, 29

According to the old reckoning of time in which the Epistles of St. Paul were supposedly written, that to the Corinthians was composed a year before that to the Romans, namely, in the year 57, though some date the writing still earlier. While Romans is a doctrinal Epistle, First Corinthians is, in the main, of a practical nature. In agreement with this general character of the Epistle, we find that also St. Paul's discussions of Holy Baptism in this epistle are purely practical. Nevertheless, also these passages contain valuable truths concerning this Sacrament, especially if we consider them in their entirety with their proof value and material.

I Cor. 1, 13-17: "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you but Crispus and Gaius, lest any should say that I had baptized in mine own name. And I baptized also the house of Stephanus; besides, I know not whether I baptized any other. For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel."

These verses really ought not to be quoted among the passages that describe Baptism according to its real function and efficiency as an efficacious means of grace. They are nevertheless considered here just because they are sometimes cited by enthusiasts as proving

---

40) Cf. Chapter 5, v, 1 ff

that St. Paul did not think very highly of Holy Baptism. Especially Baptist theologians assert that Baptism in comparison with preaching is so altogether insignificant that it may be omitted; at any rate, that persons ought not to be baptized with the understanding that it is a means of grace. But as the Epistle to the Romans proves, St. Paul regarded Baptism exactly as a means of grace, and the reasons that he expresses himself in our passage, as he does, are entirely different from those which enthusiasts commonly give.

Two facts especially must be considered when studying these verses. In the first place, they were written from the special point of view that St. Paul was the apostle of Jesus Christ among the Gentiles, whose office it was to blaze the missionary trails and proclaim the Gospel in regions in which it had not been before preached, "to preach the Gospel in regions beyond you" (41). Whatever is written from a specific point of view cannot be urged to obtain as a general rule. No congregation therefore may argue in this manner: "Because we preach the Gospel, we may neglect Baptism and the Lord's Supper." The one should be done, and the other should not be left undone. As a matter of fact, St. Paul even at Corinth baptized a number of Christian believers, as he himself declares in verses 14-16. Therefore when he says: "Christ sent me not to baptize", he means, "Christ sent me not to baptize as my principle or most important business". As the cases of Crispus, Gaius, and the household of Stephanus prove, St. Paul at times did baptize in his own person. Usually, however, he merely founded the Christian churches and then placed over the new congregations (in accordance with their will and choice) such pastors as taught the people more in detail, baptized those who were to be baptized, administered the Holy Supper, and executed the Office of the Keys in all its various functions in connection with the Church, as shown in Titus 1, 5 ff. and 1 Tim. 1, 3 ff. The

---

41) Cf. 2 Cor. 10, 14-16.

reason for this course of action is clear. In many cases those who were baptized were adults who first had to be indoctrinated, a thing which usually the brief <sup>epistles</sup> ~~writs~~ of the apostle at the different places did not permit. In short, St. Paul in these verses does not despise Baptism, but he rather honors it, because he requires of his congregations conscientious pastors who could faithfully and efficiently instruct the people... "Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God which He hath purchased with His own blood" (2).

In the second place, St. Paul wrote these verses from the particular viewpoint of the problem facing him at Corinth, namely, the strife and contention prevailing in the midst of the Corinthian Christians. He thanked God that he baptized none of them, because they could not now claim him as their head in whose name and unto whose lordship they were baptized. St. Paul's way of putting the matter was therefore a very earnest reproof for the self-satisfied and contentious Corinthians, who placed party spirit above Christian union and man above Christ. For this reason it would be entirely unfair to claim that St. Paul did not highly regard Baptism, because here he says what he does say.

Meyer remarks on this passage: "Since Paul was not generally in the habit of baptizing in person, had he himself baptized many in Corinth, this might undoubtedly have been made use of afterwards by perverse minds for the possible slander that here was a special case, that he had baptized with his own hand in Corinth, because he did it into his own name--a purpose for which of course he could not have employed others." He quotes Bengel who says with regard to the passage: "Providentia divina regnat saepe in rebus, quarum ratio postea cognoscitur." Matthew Henry writes: "He is not to be understood in

such a sense as if he were thankful for not having baptized at all, but for not having done it in the present circumstances, lest it should have had this very bad construction put upon it--that he had baptized in his own name, made disciples for himself, or set himself up as the head of a sect." Dr. Kretzmann asserts: "This fact, that only so few had been baptized by him personally, is a source of much satisfaction to him, lest anyone should, under the conditions now obtaining in Corinth, bring the accusation against him that his intention had been to bind them to his person and to form a party named after him. Note the great humility of the apostle...". The case then is clear. St. Paul did not despise Baptism, but honored it highly as an efficacious means of grace. This will appear also from the next passages that are to be considered.

1 Cor. 10, 2: "And all to Moses were baptized in the cloud and in the sea."

This passage really does not treat of Baptism properly considered; but it supports a thought which is of great value in this discussion. St. Paul here declares that the children of Israel were all baptized unto Moses ( ἐῖς ) in the cloud and in the sea. This means, that when the children of Israel followed Moses through the Red Sea and afterwards through the wilderness, with God's cloud for their protection, they were thus made to have fellowship with Moses as their leader and Mediator. Matthew Henry explains this verse thus: "They were brought under obligation to Moses' law and covenant as we are by Baptism brought under the Christian law and covenant". Meyer says: "Just as the convert was baptized in water with reference to Christ, so also that Old Testament analog of Baptism, which presents itself in the people of Israel at the passage of the Red Sea with reference to Moses, was effected in the cloud under which they were and in the sea through which they passed." The Hirschberger Bible says: "Durch die Wolke und das Wasser..."

wurden sie alle auch auf oder in Moses getauft, das ist, dem Moses getauft, das ist, dem Moses, als dem Knecht, zu glauben ( 2 Mos. 14 31) verpflichtet, an ihm gewissen und des Heils, das Gott durch seine Hand an ihnen tun wolle, Apst. 7, 25, versichert."

All these expositions agree essentially. What interests us especially in this passage is that also here in the case of Moses, the expression *παρισύει εἰς* denotes a definite effect, the creation of a fellowship, for which reason Baptism is more than a symbol, namely, a means of grace. In other words, St. Paul never thinks of Baptism as being a mere sign; always he regards it as an action which puts the baptized into a definite relation with the one into whom or with reference to whom he is baptized. For this reason also this passage, although not treating of Baptism proper, is of great importance.

1 Cor. 12, 13: "For also by one Spirit we all into one body were baptized, whether Jews or Greeks, whether bondsmen or free, and all into one Spirit were made to drink."

This passage again proves that Baptism is an effectual means of grace, accomplishing participation or fellowship; for here the apostle declares in a most general and comprehensive way that Christians are baptized by one Spirit into one body. What the apostle wishes to stress in this entire chapter is the inward unity of all believers in Christ. They form one spiritual body, namely, the spiritual body of Christ, their Lord. Into this body they were received by Baptism, and that not because Baptism exerts some magic power, but because the Holy Spirit is efficacious in this Sacrament toward their regeneration. That is the simple meaning of the passage.

The Corinthians were disunited. There were diversities of gifts, differences of administration, and diversities of operations among the

---

newly converted Christians at Corinth. The result was that they envied ~~one~~ another and desired in a proud, unchristian way those conspicuous gifts which might redound to their personal glory, refusing of course in their pride to cooperate properly with their humbler brethren. This wicked tendency and manifestation of the flesh St. Paul rebukes, showing at the same time the wonderful unity which both Baptism and the Lord's Supper produce. By one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, he tells them, and just so we were all made to drink into one Spirit, that is, all were united into one spiritual body of Christ. This thought is certainly important. Baptism, as also the Lord's Supper, is not a mere outward sign of the spiritual union of Christians, but actually the instrumental cause of that true unity which believers enjoy in Jesus Christ.

Matthew Henry comments on this verse: "Jews and Gentiles, bond and free, are upon a level in this; all are baptized into the one body and made partakers of the same Spirit. Christians become members of this body by Baptism; they are baptized into one body." Following this testimony, however, he deviates along Calvinistic lines, stating: "The outward rite is of divine institution, significant of the new birth, called therefore the washing of regeneration, 43). But it by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. It is the Spirit's operation, signified by the outward administration, that makes us members." This Calvinistic explanation is of course not correct, for while it is the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us, He works regeneration through the Gospel promise in Holy Baptism, or through Holy Baptism itself. The words of the verse are so clear, however, that, while following the simple sense of the text, Matthew Henry was obliged to show the meaning

---

43) Cf. Titus 3, 5.



correctly in the first part of his exposition.

Meyer correctly refers this passage to Holy Baptism and interprets the words *ei<sup>s</sup> & ei<sup>s</sup>a* in reference to one body (Matt. 28, 19; Rom. 8, 3; 1 Cor. 10, 2) to mean: "It has as its destination that we all now make up one body." Afterwards he says: "The reference to Baptism was correctly made by as early commentators as Chrysostom, Jerome, Theophylact; in recent times, by Ruckert, Baur, De Fette, Ewald, Maier, Hofmann." Very plainly the Weimar Bible writes: "Wir sind durch die Heiligen Taufe durch die Kraft des Heiligen Geistes, wiedergeboren worden, dass wir alle ein geistlicher Leib werden, dessen Haupt Christus ist." Afterwards it quotes Luther as saying: "Wir trinken allerlei Sakrament, dass wir auch einerlei Geist empfangen, gleichwie wir einerlei Taufe empfangen, auf dass wir ein Leib seien." Dr. Kretzmann remarks: "The unity of the one great Church system is effected by means of Baptism; we were all made to drink of the same Spirit; He was and is the spiritual refreshment which our souls receive by faith."

This passage therefore teaches that Holy Baptism is a means of grace by which the Holy Spirit creates a spiritual fellowship or participation, all believers forming the spiritual body of Christ and by faith possessing His blessed merits to their salvation. Again, also the apostle urges here upon the ground of Christian Baptism that newness of life which expresses itself in love and harmony and peace. Brief as the passage is, it declares the same great fundamental truths concerning Baptism which were dealt with in Rom. 6, 3-6.

1 Cor. 15, 29: "Since what shall they do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead are not raised at all? Why also are they baptized for the dead?"

This remarkable passage has been corrupted by extreme enthusiasts as the Mormons into the anti-scriptural doctrine that the living may

---

have themselves baptized for the salvation of the dead--an error which Scripture bids us reject, since "the just shall live by his faith" 44), which means that no one else can believe or by his works make atonement for the sins of another. In other words, if anyone desires to be saved, he himself must be converted and believe; no one can do any believing for his brother. The difficulty involved in the phrase *ἐνὶ τῷ νεκρῷ*, Luther has solved in the best and simplest manner by saying: "Die Auferstehung zu bestaerken, liessen sich die Christen taufen ueber den Totengraebem und deuten auf dieselbigen, dass eben dieselbigen wuerden auferstehen." This local meaning of the *ἐνὶ* with the genitive is grammatically proper. The phrase may be translated also, "with reference to the dead," though in the final analysis the meaning is the same. Clarko in his commentary gives a slightly different exposition, but one which also is in harmony with the text and context. He writes: "The sum of the apostle's meaning appears to be this: If there is no resurrection of the dead, those, who, in becoming Christians, expose themselves to all manner of privations, crosses, severe sufferings, and a violent death, can have no compensation, nor any motive sufficient to induce them to expose themselves to such miseries. Thus they are baptized for the dead in perfect faith of the resurrection."

There are mainly two truths that interest us in the study of this verse. The first is that Baptism at Corinth was well-known, firmly established, and consistently used by those early Christians. In the second place, Baptism was to them not an empty formula, nor a meaningless sign, but they were baptized in the living hope of the resurrection of the dead. If that is true, then Baptism must have been to them a ground of eternal hope and a means by which they might comfort themselves by it in Christ Jesus. The text gives us little detailed information. Much is presupposed by the apostle and taken

for granted. But the importance of Baptism for the Christian life of hope and holiness is also plainly set forth. Certainly, the Christians who baptized themselves over the dead, or with reference to the dead, or, in the face of deadly perils and pains, could not treat Baptism lightly but must have esteemed it very highly.

While First Corinthians was written before Romans and contains far less detailed doctrinal information on Baptism, the fact remains that it sets forth no other doctrine concerning Baptism than does the weighty epistle of St. Paul to the Romans.

### C. GALATIANS 3, 26-27

"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as into Christ were baptized, Christ you did put on."

This is one of the most informing passages on Baptism in the entire group of Pauline Epistles. According to the time-honored reckoning, Galatians was written before First Corinthians and Romans, though perhaps in the same year in which the apostle addressed his letters to the Corinthians, about 57 A.D. But in this case the incentive for expounding and applying the doctrine was different. In Romans and First Corinthians he used the doctrine for urging holiness of life; here the apostle employs it in the defense of the central article of the Christian faith--justification by faith. In the third chapter of Galatians the apostle's discussion of Baptism forms the climax of a very appealing address, which urges them to renounce the doctrine of work righteousness and to return to the solâ fide.

The gist of the apostle's thought may be expressed thus: "Galatians, now that you are Christians, still you desire to be saved by your works. But that is impossible, because works cannot save you. Faith alone saves, as we see in the life of Abraham. The Law demands perfect

---

works which no sinner can render to God. Only the man who really does the works of the Law, can live. But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law that the blessing of Abraham may come upon us Gentiles. In Christ Jesus alone we inherit His blessing of life and salvation. The Law was not against the divine promise; it was rather our school-master to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. Since faith has come, we are no longer under the Law. Now we are children of God through faith in Christ, for as many as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ, that is, as the context asserts, have put on His righteousness and salvation by faith as a "beautiful garment" 45). The result is that all these believers are one in Christ Jesus. Indeed, they are Christ's, and thus also heirs of that promise made to Abraham.

When we therefore study verses 26 and 27 in their connection, we understand at once what the apostle means to express by them. As in Rom. 8, 3 ff and in I Cor 12, 13, he actually and clearly tells his readers that by faith in Christ Jesus they are God's children. No other explanation is possible. When St. Paul writes: ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε, and this after he has just said that the Galatians were God's children by faith in Christ Jesus, the text can mean but this that they put Him on in regeneration through their new Baptism, by which they were made believers in Him. There is also a putting on of Christ in sanctification, "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof" 46); and "Put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" 47). But this putting on of Christ in the sphere of sanctification is here excluded, since the context urges not sanctification but regeneration.

---

45) Cf. Isaiah 61, 10

46) Cf. Rom. 13, 14

Very adequately the Weimar Bible explains the passage: "Wie viele unter euch das Sakrament der Heiligen Taufe empfangen habt, welche im Neuen Testament an Stelle der Beschneidung eingesetzt ist, Kol. 2, 11, die haben Christum und seine Gerechtigkeit durch den Glauben angezogen und sind in die Gemeinschaft aller seiner Gueter gekommen." This interpretation is both Scriptural and textual and satisfies every demand of the context. The International Critical Commentary, generally reliable doctrinally, nevertheless says: "To put on Christ is to become as Christ, to have His standing; in this context, to become objects of the divine favor, sons of God, as He is the Son of God (?)...It is a substantiation ( $\gamma\acute{\alpha}\rho$   $\phi$ ) of the assertion of v. 26, that they are sons of God, drawn from an interpretation of the significance of their Baptism."

Bongol explains the passage thus: "Den Römischen Juenglingen wurde zum Zeichen der Freiheit ein Ehrenkleid ("toga virilis") angezogen. Christus, will Paul sagen, ist euer Ehrenkleid; man beurteilt euch nicht mehr nach dem, was ihr zuvor gewesen seid; ihr seid jetzt in Christo, ihr seid Christi, und so seid ihr alle gleich. Christus ist Gottes Sohn, und in ihm seid Ihr Gottes Kinder." Meyer remarks to  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\acute{\omicron}\nu \epsilon\nu\epsilon\delta\upsilon\sigma\alpha\theta\epsilon\varsigma$ : "Laying aside the figure, according to the connection, Paul means to say: Ye have appropriated the same peculiar state of life, that is, the very same specific relation to God, in which Christ stands; consequently as He is the Son of God, ye have likewise entered into the sonship of God, namely, by means of the  $\pi\nu\epsilon\upsilon\mu\alpha \nu\iota\theta\epsilon\omega\sigma\iota\alpha\varsigma$  received at Baptism." Dr. Kretzmann avers: "Our baptism was done in Christ, unto Christ, we have thereby entered into the most intimate relation with Christ.... In and with Christ we are clothed with His innocence, righteousness, wisdom, power, salvation, spirit, and life."

---

Reformed exegetes violently oppose this explanation, which Lutherans, and before them, the old church fathers have given to these words. But no matter what they may do to weaken the force of the text, the fact remains that St. Paul says here substantially that which he professed in Rom. 6, 3 and 1 Cor. 12, 13, namely, that Baptism is an efficacious means of grace by which we are regenerated and thus become God's dear children.

Luther conclusively interprets the passage when he writes: "Christum anziehen ist ein geistlich Anziehen und geht so zu, dass die Seele sich Christi und aller seiner Gerechtigkeit annimmt als ihres eigenen Gutes" 47).

#### D. EPHESIANS 5, 25-27

"Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ loved the assembly, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed (it) by the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself glorious the assembly (Church), not having spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it might be holy and blameless."

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written in 62 A.D., the same year in which that to the Colossians was composed, though the latter may have been penned a little before that to the Ephesians. At any rate, it presents a passage on Baptism that is truly remarkable for its clarity of expression.

As in Romans and First Corinthians, St. Paul also here urges Baptism as a ground for sanctification. Husbands should love their wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The love of a husband toward his wife should therefore be a true, deep, abiding, self-sacrificing love. But the subject of Christ's perfect divine love for the Church is so remarkable to the apostle that he bestows great attention upon the matter. Only in verse 28 does he return to his subject, saying, "So ought men to love their wives

47) Luther, St. Louis Edition, XII, 266

Reformed exegetes violently oppose this explanation, which Lutherans, and before them, the old church fathers have given to these words. But no matter what they may do to weaken the force of the text, the fact remains that St. Paul says here substantially that which he professed in Rom. 6, 3 and 1 Cor. 12, 13, namely, that Baptism is an efficacious means of grace by which we are regenerated and thus become God's dear children.

Luther conclusively interprets the passage when he writes: "Christum anziehen ist ein geistlich Anziehen und geht so zu, dass die Seele sich Christi und aller seiner Gerechtigkeit annimmt als ihres eigenen Gutes" 47).

#### D. EPHESIANS 5, 25-27

"Husbands, love your own wives, even as Christ loved the assembly, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed (it) by the washing of water by the Word, that He might present it to Himself glorious the assembly (Church), not having spot, or wrinkle, or any of such things, but that it might be holy and blameless."

The Epistle to the Ephesians was written in 62 A.D., the same year in which that to the Colossians was composed, though the latter may have been penned a little before that to the Ephesians. At any rate, it presents a passage on Baptism that is truly remarkable for its clarity of expression.

As in Romans and First Corinthians, St. Paul also here urges Baptism as a ground for sanctification. Husbands should love their wives, even as Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for it. The love of a husband toward his wife should therefore be a true, deep, abiding, self-sacrificing love. But the subject of Christ's perfect divine love for the Church is so remarkable to the apostle that he bestows great attention upon the matter. Only in verse 28 does he return to his subject, saying, "So ought men to love their wives

as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife, loveth himself." Between these two verses, which treat of the love of husbands for their wives, St. Paul glorifies the self-sacrificing love of Christ, the head of His Church, which is His spiritual bride. That beloved bride, Christ, the sinless Son of God, desires to present as a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but being holy and without blemish 48). For that reason Christ gave Himself for His Church. The apostle does not here deny the fact that Christ is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world 49), or that He is the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world 50), but what he wishes to emphasize is the intimate, holy, perfect relation that exists between Christ and His Church, and this in order that husbands may emulate this wonderful union in their own marriage. The most perfect and blissful union that exists is thus made to serve us for an example which we are to follow in holy wedlock.

What is to us of special interest in this discussion of the doctrine of Baptism is the apostle's statement in verse 26, where he shows that the Savior's whole self-giving love was spent in order that He might sanctify and cleanse the Church, His bride, with the washing of water by the Word, *ἵνα ὑμῖν ἑαυτὴν καθαρίσῃ τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ ὕδατος ἐν ῥήματι*. From what we have so far learned in the study of the passages in Romans, First Corinthians, and Galatians, this expression cannot surprise us as odd or as subject to misunderstanding. If Baptism in the estimation of St. Paul means so much that it puts us into fellowship with Christ's death and resurrection, if it unites us into one spiritual body with Christ, if it causes us to put on Christ with His entire righteousness, in other words, if it is really an efficacious means of grace, then we cannot understand the expression "with the washing of water by the Word," in any other sense that Lutheran theologians have always understood it.

48) Cf. v. 27

49) Cf. 1 John 2,2

50) Cf. 1 John 1, 29



What interests us especially about this passage is that the apostle here for the first time defines Holy Baptism, which he has not done in the previous passages. Enthusiastic theologians cannot deny that the reference here is clearly to Baptism, though they do try to deny what here Paul expressly declares Baptism to be, namely, a "washing of water by the Word."

Just that is what Baptism is, not simple water only, but water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word. That is Luther's definition of Baptism and it rests upon this very passage. In Baptism there is water; yet it is not the water itself that saves, but the Word which is in and with the water, as Luther declares. That it is the Word, the Gospel, that makes this divine washing a means of grace, Paul explains in greater detail in one of the passages following, Titus 3, 5. But even without this passage the meaning of this text is clear. According to Paul in 2 Cor. 5, 19, "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation", Christ by His perfect vicarious obedience has secured a complete atonement for the sins of the whole world. But this full atonement, this all-sufficient satisfaction, He offers, conveys, and seals to men through the means of grace, the Word and the Sacraments. The Sacraments are true means of grace, just because the Word or true Gospel promise is connected with them. It is the Word that renders them efficacious 51). Baptism is then God's "washing of water by the Word". In it sins are washed away, are forgiven in agreement with the Gospel promise that offers us pardon and peace. No wonder that St. Paul here predicates of Baptism a cleansing, sanctifying power. It is God's most certain absolution connected with a visible sign; therefore, "a visible Word".

---

51) Rom. 1, 16

Theologians, guided by the text and not permitting themselves to be misled by reason, have always interpreted this clear text in the manner just shown. Meyer, though his exegesis on this point is not entirely in accordance with the Lutheran doctrine of Baptism, since he separates the "cleansing by the Word" from the "washing of water", nevertheless says: "τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος ... denotes the well-known bath of water κατ' ἐξοχήν , i. e., "preeminently", which is administered by Baptism. We have thus here not simply an allusion to Baptism, but a designation of the same 52). By εὐαγγέλιον is meant the Gospel, τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς πίστεως 53) and here stands without the article, because, denoting the Word κατ' ἐξοχήν , i. e., "preeminently", it could be treated like a proper noun, such as νόμος , χάρις , and the like". He admits however that many other exegetes (preeminently Luther): "by the water-bath in the Word") connect ἐν ῥήματι with τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος . Bengel says very descriptively: "Wir haben hier ein treffliches Zeugnis fuer den Wert der Taufe, Tit. 3, 5, welche ihre reinigende Kraft in dem mit dem Wasser verbundenen Wort hat, Joh. 15, 3. Er hat sie gereinigt im Wort durch das Bad des Wassers." The Weimar Bible explains the expression "washing of water by the Word" thus: "Durch die heilige Taufe, in welcher Wasser und Wort mit einander verbunden sind." This evidently is the sense of the phrase, which states the important truth, taught in other places in the Pauline Epistles, that Baptism is an efficacious means of grace by which we obtain regeneration and sanctification through the very Word which is "in and with the water".

#### E. COL. 2, 10-12

"And ye are in Him complete, who is the head of all principality and authority, in whom also ye were circumcised with circumcision not made by hand, in the putting off of the body of the sins of the flesh,

52) Cf. Tit. 3, 5; 1 Cor. 6, 11  
53) Cf. Rom. 10, 8; Eph. 6, 17; Heb. 6, 5

in the circumcision of the Christ, having been buried with Him in Baptism, in which also ye were raised with Him through the faith of the working of God who raised Him from among the dead."

The Epistle to the Colossians was composed about the same time as that to the Ephesians, though perhaps a little before it, and presents many of the same truths which St. Paul urges to the Ephesians. In the chapter from which our passage is taken, St. Paul urges his readers to be faithful to their Lord, to avoid ungodly philosophy and empty tradition, the idolatrous worship of angels, and the legal ceremonies, which in Christ were terminated. Our passage, in particular, is used by St. Paul as an argument to avoid philosophy and vain deceit; for, as he argues, "Ye are complete in Him, which is the Head of all principality and authority." Luther remarks on this verse: "Ihr habt's ganz und gar, wenn ihr Christus habt, duerft ihr nichts weiter suchen."

In verses 11 and 12 the apostle next shows why Christians are complete in Christ. The gist of the two verses is: "You are in Christ, that is, joined to Him, because you have been circumcised with the circumcision without hands, by which, because it is the circumcision of Christ, the body of the sins of the flesh was put off. The reference in verse 11 is clearly to the circumcision of the Old Testament. That was made with hands by the priests, and it put off a part of the flesh, namely, the foreskin. But just this is Paul's argument...the New Testament believers are circumcised with a more effective circumcision, namely, that of Christ, by which the whole body of the sins of the flesh is put off. The apostle thus speaks of the spiritual circumcision of the New Testament, and to make himself fully understood, he adds in the next verse that what he means is, that his readers were buried with Christ in Baptism, by

---

by which also they were risen through the faith which the omnipotent God, who raised Christ from the dead, works by that very spiritual circumcision, or Baptism.

As we see, St. Paul's doctrine concerning Holy Baptism is always the same, whether he treats it in Romans, First Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, or here in Colossians. Baptism is to him an efficacious means of grace, not a mere sign. It is "a washing of water by the Word", in which the Holy Spirit operates toward the regeneration of the baptized, and not with feeble power, but with that almighty power by which God raised Christ from the dead. Negatively, Baptism cleanses from sin; positively it puts the baptized person into possession of all the spiritual gifts which Christ secured for mankind by His death and resurrection. In our passage special interest attaches to the fact that the apostle here teaches that in the New Testament, Baptism has taken the place of the Old Testament ceremonial circumcision, it being itself a spiritual circumcision. However, already in the Old Testament, circumcision was already a sign and pledge of divine grace 54).

The Weimar Bible remarks in its simple, pithy way: "Wie Christus ist fuer unsere Suende gestorben und begraben worden, so seid ihr in der Taufe dor Suende abgestorben, in welchem (Christo) ihr auch seid geistlicher Weise auferstanden zum neuen Leben durch den Glauben an ihn, den Gottes wirkt, welcher Glaube nicht ist ein Werk natuerlicher menschlicher Kraefte, sondern Gott wirket denselben, welcher ihn (Christum) auferweckt hat von den Toten." That manifestly is the sense of these words. Bengel writes on verse 11: "Bei der juedischen Beschneidung wurde die Vorhaut entfernt; in der newtestamentlichen Beschneidung soll der ganze Leib entfernt werden. Das Ausziehen des Leibes ist ein milder Ausdruck fuer den Tod."

---

54) Cf. Rom. 4, 11 ff

Another point that is of special importance to us in this passage is the fact that the apostle connects faith with Baptism, telling his hearers that they were buried and risen with Christ in Baptism through the faith of the operation of God. Hence he plainly rejects the Romanistic doctrine of a mechanical action (ex opere operato) in Baptism, and he expressly tells us that God in Baptism engendered that faith by which we have fellowship with His death and resurrection. Our passage thus says the same thing that Luther emphasizes in his Small Catechism, when he declares that it is not the water that does such miracles of grace, but the Word of God that is in and with the water, and faith which trusts such Word of God in the water.

The enthusiastic exegetes, whether Reformed, papistic, or otherwise, find it hard to deal adequately with these passages. Contrary to the clear words of the text, they invariably assert that the Holy Spirit works regeneration apart from the means of grace, the Word and the Sacrament. Yet so forceful and lucid are the words of Holy Scripture that they, when trying to be objective, must admit that the Lutherans in their interpretations of the passage are right. The Critical and Explanatory Commentary thus says: "Baptism is regarded as the burial of the old carnal life." Meyer writes on the passage: "Through the fellowship of Christ's death man dies as to his sinful nature so that the σῶμα τῆς σαρκός 55) ceases to live, and by means of the fellowship of His burial is put off. The immersion in Baptism, in accordance with its similarity to burial, is....seeing that Baptism translates into the fellowship of the death of Christ (Rom. 6, 3).. a burial along with Christ, Rom. 6, 4." Dr. Kretzmann in his Popular Commentary says: "The circumcision of Christ.... is Baptism. That is the visible means by which the Lord works regeneration in our hearts."

The Old Adam in us was mortally wounded when the Lord received us as His own in Baptism."

Also this passage declares only what Paul has already taught in the passages which we have considered before. To him Baptism is a spiritual circumcision, a means of grace, by which, through faith, God works therein, the body of sin is put off and the baptized is engrafted into fellowship with Christ, enjoying all His spiritual merits of forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation.

#### F. TITUS 3, 3-7

"Not by works which were in righteousness which we practised, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, that being justified by His grace, we should become heirs according to the hope of life eternal."

The Epistle to Titus was written in 67, ten years later than First Corinthians. It was addressed to a minister of Christ and is therefore rather theological in content, that is, it sets forth especially those points of doctrine which a Christian minister must insist upon against all errorists who deny Christ and salvation by faith in Christ's blood. Titus should preach the Word faithfully, especially since God has graciously rescued us from sin and its dreadful consequences 56), after the kindness and love of God had appeared to man in Christ 57). This rescuing by the kindness and love of God occurred not on account of any works of righteousness which we have done who were delivered from sin, but solely by God's mercy 58) in Christ our Savior 59). This is the sequence of thought in this passage. Sinners were delivered from perdition by the grace of God through faith in Christ, the Savior of the world.

56) Cf. v. 3

57) Cf. v. 4

58) Cf. v. 5a

59) Cf. v. 7

But now the apostle explains also the direct means by which God has saved Christian believers. St. Paul says that God saved them "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost", *διὰ λουτροῦ καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου*. In the light of the passages which have been already considered, there can be no doubt as to the meaning of this striking phrase. With St. Paul Baptism was central in the whole doctrine of Christian salvation, not incidental, not secondary. Always he speaks of it as accomplishing wonderful things, putting the baptized into fellowship with Christ's death and resurrection, sanctifying and cleansing him, uniting him with the spiritual body of Christ, etc... Hence when the Weimar Bible explains these words to mean: "Durch die Heilige Taufe, welche ist das selige Mittel, wodurch der Heilige Geist die Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung in uns wirkt," no one who really studies the text objectively can deny that this is the real meaning of the words. The Critical and Explanatory Commentary here quotes Calvin who writes on this passage: "The apostles are wont to draw an argument from the Sacraments to prove the thing therein signified, because it ought to be a recognized principle among the godly, that God does not mock us with empty signs, but by His power inwardly (?) makes good what He demonstrates by the outward sign (?). Wherefore Baptism is congruously and truly called the laver of regeneration. We must connect the sign and the thing signified, so as not to make the sign empty and ineffectual; and yet not, for the sake of honoring the sign, to detract from the Holy Spirit what is peculiarly His." 60)

This exegesis of Calvin is opposed to the clear reading of the text, which says that God saves us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. The expression *λουτροῦ* in St. Paul's epistles, whenever he writes of the means by which regeneration takes

---

60) Cf. 1 Pet. 3, 21

place, can only mean Baptism, and the genitives *καλιγγενεσίας* and *ἀνακαινώσεως* are descriptive, depicting what kind of laver Baptism is, namely, one by which the Holy Ghost regenerates and sanctifies. Any other exegesis does violence to the text. Against Calvin let us say that St. Paul does not separate the Holy Spirit from the Sacrament, but joins them and unites their action in such a way that we can say directly: "Baptism saves us" (61). We quote this false explanation of Calvin to show, on the one hand, how unreasonably the Reformed distort the clear text of Scripture because of their enthusiastic prejudices against the Sacraments, and, on the other, to demonstrate, how, nevertheless, all their false exegesis cannot convince the unbiased reader that what Paul here teaches is really the Lutheran teaching. The sinful prejudice of enthusiastic exegetes reveals itself in every attempt on their part to make the Scripture text say what really it does not say. Among Lutheran exegetes there is no substantial difference of interpretation on this passage. Meyer says: "The expression τὸ λουτρὸν καλιγγενεσίας καὶ ἀνακαινώσεως πνεύματος ἁγίου has been very arbitrarily interpreted by some expositors; some taking λουτρὸν as a figurative name for the regeneratio itself, or for the predicatio evangelii, or for the Holy Spirit, or for the abundant imparting of the Spirit. From Eph. 5, 26 it is clear that it can mean nothing else than Baptism" (62). Later he says: "Baptism is to the apostle what he says of it here, that is, the means of the new birth or renewal by the Holy Spirit". The genitive πνεύματος ἁγίου, Meyer correctly explains as the genitive of the efficient cause: the regeneration and renewal wrought by the Holy Spirit. Dr. Kretzmann writes: "This salvation has been transmitted to us through the washing of regeneration. God uses a washing of water, Holy Baptism, as a means to transmit and

61) Cf. 1 Pet. 3, 21

62) Cf. Heb. 10, 23; Cor. 6, 11; Acts 22, 16



seal to the believer the inestimable benefits of salvation. Through Baptism, regeneration is wrought in the heart of man; he is born anew to a wonderful spiritual life."

This passage is the one generally quoted by Lutheran theologians to show that Baptism really is a true means of grace, by which the Holy Ghost regenerates and sanctifies sinners. This brief discussion proves that true Lutherans have every good reason to abide by our interpretation, and that the false explanation of enthusiastic theologians only proves that they do not want to accept the scriptural truth which God's Word teaches so clearly concerning the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.

#### G. HEBREWS 10, 22

"We should approach with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having been sprinkled (as to) the hearts from a wicked conscience, and having been washed (as to) the body with pure water."

This passage may be touched upon, because it is so very correctly referred to as supporting the passages of the Pauline epistles on Baptism which have been considered so far. Whether St. Paul really wrote the epistle to the Hebrews is of course questionable, but the ancient tradition is rather hard to disprove, and, in the end, the assumption of the Pauline authorship best meets all the exigencies of the great problem of the authorship. Be that as it may, this passage is in full accordance with whatever St. Paul treats on Baptism in the passages already studied. Also here the reference to Holy Baptism appears in a striking climax, and here, too, the reference is made for the sake of the Christian life which the addressed Christians were to live.

The Apostle's argument is this, briefly: Because we have a divine High Priest, who has made a perfect sacrifice for our sins, let us

---

both draw nigh to God in full assurance of faith 63) and let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering 64). What else the apostle writes in verse 22b, very well describes those believers who should draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith and hold fast to its profession. They are such as have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and their bodies washed with pure water. The first expression, as the Weimar Bible points out, clearly points to the blood of Christ: "Mit dem Blut Christi des unschuldigen Laemmleins Gottes besprengt," 1 Pet. 1,2; the second, as the same Bible shows, points to Baptism: "Nicht mit blossen, schlechten Wasser, mit welchem die Levitischen Priester bei Verrichtung des Gottesdienstes pflegten zu reinigen, sondern mit dem allerheiligsten Wasser der Taufe, als mit dem Bad der Wiedergeburt und Erneuerung des Heiligen Geistes, Titus 3, 5." The two statements are therefore not exclusive, but inclusive. Those who are sprinkled are also washed, and both the sprinkling and the washing are why believers should hold fast to the profession of their faith. Christ has sprinkled them with His blood and washed them with His baptismal water, so that they are now fully cleansed. And this gracious work of God, performed in their regeneration, should move them to profess the Christian faith with great confidence and boldness. Such is the general connection of the two important expressions.

The New Testament With Notes writes on verse 22: "Let us draw near to God on His throne of grace, our hearts sprinkled and our bodies washed: The reference is to the consecration of the Levitical priests by the sprinkling of the blood and the washing of water, Lev. 8, 6. 23. 24. 30, which shadowed forth the true consecration of believers to their spiritual priesthood by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ and the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, 65)"

---

63) Cf. v. 22

64) Cf. v. 23

65) Cf. Titus 3, 5; 1 Pet. 1, 2; 2, 5

If now this popular commentary would have gone a step farther and declared that what the text here actually means, i.e. Holy Baptism, the its exegesis would be fully correct and complete; for just that is what the apostle Paul means.

Moffat, a Liberalist, writing in The International Critical Commentary, though he himself rejects the Lutheran doctrine of Baptism as a means of grace, nevertheless says on verse 22:

"The writer adds *ἀλλοιούμενοι τὸ σῶμα ὡς κλύμαρον*, suggesting that Baptism corresponded to the bathing of priests (e.g., in Lev. 16, 14). Once and for all, at Baptism (1Pet. 3, 21), Christians have been thus purified from their guilty stains by the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice (more especially by the *αἷμα ἁγιασμοῦ* of 12, 24). What room then can there be in the minds for anything but faith, a confident faith, that draws near to God, sure that there is no longer anything between Him and them?"

The force of the text is so great that even this liberal exegete, trying to be fair to the words of Scripture, must admit the Lutheran doctrine of Baptism, namely, that it is a true washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

If we were not confined to limits, the historical and grammatical elements of the texts might be treated in unlimited detail. Yet even by this simple treatment of the texts in their connection and their mutual relation to one another the fact has been demonstrated that Paul really and fully teaches that Baptism is a means of grace, a true washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, and that in the Pauline Epistles he teaches those very five points on Baptism which our Confessions so greatly emphasize, namely, those concerning the mode, the nature, the efficacy, the right use, and the significance of this saving Sacrament. Our Confessions stand on Scriptural ground when they say of Baptism what they do say, and may God grant us grace that we may abide by this Scriptural truth!

---

## III

## ERRORS OF ENTHUSIASM OPPOSING THE LUTHERAN DOCTRINE

This discussion on this matter must be necessarily brief, but a longer discussion of enthusiastic errors is hardly necessary, since, in the discussion of the passages themselves, the chief errors of the Enthusiasts were already refuted. Hence little more than a tabulation follows:

In the first place the Reformed Enthusiasts teach that the Word and the Sacraments are not the true means of grace by which God desires to impart to us His Spirit and grace, but mere symbols and outward signs (66). This false doctrine is opposed to all the passages considered, for in all of them the apostle ascribes regeneration and renewal to the means of grace, in particular, Holy Baptism.

In the second place, the Reformed Enthusiasts separate the work of the Holy Ghost from the means of grace. But this again is contrary to the passages studied, for in them the apostle expressly says that the Christians to whom he writes were cleansed by (ἐν), which denotes instrumentality (67).

In the third place, the papistic and Greek orthodox enthusiasts teach that Christ has instituted seven Sacraments (68). But St. Paul in his epistles never mentions any other Sacraments as means of grace than Baptism and the Lord's Supper (69).

In the fourth place, papistic enthusiasts teach in various forms that the efficacy of the Sacraments depends in some way

- 66) Cf. Zwingli's Fidei Ratio; Ed. Niemeyer, p. 32; Guenther, Populaere Symbolik, p. 269 ff.; Popular Symbolics, p. 118, 261.  
 67) Cf. Eph. 5, 25; Tit. 3, 5; etc. Cf. Guenther, Populaere Symbolik, p. 270; Popular Symbolics, p. 269.  
 68) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 285; Popular Symbolics, p. 104, 111.  
 69) Cf. The passages treated, and those treating of the Holy Supper and the Gospel as means of grace, I Cor. 1, 21; Rom. 10, 27; Is. 55, 11, etc.

on the piety and purpose of the administrant 70). But the texts considered show that St. Paul did not teach such a doctrine; hence, it must be rejected as false.

In the fifth place, the Papistic enthusiasts teach that the Sacraments impart grace mechanically (ex opere operato) 71). But in Gal. 3, 26. 27; Col. 2, 10-12; etc., St. Paul either directly or indirectly teaches that faith receives the gifts offered by God in the means of grace.

In the sixth place, some enthusiasts teach that Baptism has not been instituted as a Sacrament to be celebrated till the end of time 72). But in the passages considered, St. Paul speaks of the Sacraments as those means by which God wishes to deal with sinners; nor does he say anything about their having been only a temporary appointment.

In the seventh place, some enthusiasts insist that Baptism must take place by immersion 73). But in the passages considered, St. Paul does not stress any particular mode to the exclusion of others.

In the eighth place, papistic enthusiasts limit the efficacy of Holy Baptism to original sins and actual sins committed before Baptism 74]. But this error contradicts Eph. 5, 25; Tit. 3, 5; and other clear passages treating of Holy Baptism.

In the ninth place, papistic enthusiasts insist that by Baptism there is impressed upon the baptized an indelible character (character indelibilis) 75). But St. Paul in the passages studied does not mention such an indelible character.

- 70) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 292; Popular Symbolics, p. 105, 252b, 254  
 71) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 292; Popular Symbolics, p. 113, 233.  
 72) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 295 ff; Popular Symbolics, p. 114.  
 73) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 296 ff; Popular Symbolics, p. 211.  
 74) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 298 ff; Popular Symbolics, p. 118, 235  
 75) Cf. Guenther, Symbolik, p. 307 ff; Popular Symbolics, p. 119, 235

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Concordia Triglotta, C. P. H., St. Louis, Mo.  
Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik, C. P. H., St. Louis, Mo.  
Engolder, Dogmatical Notes  
Mueller, Christian Dogmatics, C. P. H., St. Louis, Mo.  
Concordia Cyclopaedia, C. P. H., St. Louis, Mo.  
Kretzmann, Popular Commentray, C. P. H., St. Louis, Mo.  
Hutterus Redivivus, Breckkopf und Haertel, Leipzig  
Guenther, Symbolik  
Popular Symbolics, C. P. H., St. Louis, Mo.  
Meyer, Commentary on the New Testament, Funk and Wagnalls, N. Y.  
Clarke, Commentary on the New Testament, Methodist Book Concern, N. Y.  
Matthew Henry's Commentary, Fleming H. Revell, N. Y.  
Charles, International Critical Commentary, Scribner's, N. Y.  
The Weimar Bible  
The Expositor's Greek New Testament, Hodder and Sloughton, N. Y.  
The Hirschberger Bible  
The New Testament With Notes  
The Lutheran Commentary, Christian Literature Co., N. Y.  
Zahn, Kommentar zum Neuen Testament, Leipzig  
Mausel, Kirchliche Handlexikon, Leipzig  
Hayes, Paul and His Epistles, Methodist Book Concern, N. Y.  
Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament  
Weis, Commentary on the New Testament, Funk and Wagnalls, N. Y.  
Norlie, The Outlined Bible  
Luther's Works, St. Louis Edition  
Meyer, Kommentar ueber das Neue Testament, Vandenoeeck and Rupprecht  
Goettingen  
Bengel, Gnomon