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Infant Baptism in the Nineteenth Century;

Scaer; Th. D.; 1963

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of the Graduate School, St. Louis,
Department of Systematic Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Theology

David Paul Scaer

1963

Approved by:

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PROTESTANT THEOLOGY OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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by

David Paul Scaer

May 1963

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24507

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The doctrine of baptism, including infant baptism, has not had the same position of notoriety in The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod as have such controverted doctrines as Scripture and the Church. Except for the Rationalistic elements¹ and the mediating elements of Samuel Schmucker's "American Lutheranism"² with the spiritual children of both in the Lutheran church in America, there seems to be little quarrel concerning the doctrine of baptism among the various Lutheran churches in America. A quick perusal of "Taufe" in Eckhardt's Homiletisches Reallexikon³ will show that in the past baptism was not subject to great controversy between the Missouri Synod and other Lutherans in America. Indicative of the comparatively insignificant place of baptism in the total theological outlook is the lack of a special locus concerning it

¹These Rationalistic elements were best set forth by Frederick Henry Quitman in Evangelical Catechism (Hudson: William E. Norman, 1814), pp. 109ff. While Quitman does not deny the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, he certainly does not affirm it.

²Among the errors of the Lutheran Confessions listed in the Definite Synodical Platform written by Schmucker was baptismal regeneration. It was also said that baptism could not convert or regenerate children. Vergilius Ferm, The Crisis in American Lutheran Theology (New York: The Century Co., 1927), pp. 209ff.

³E. Eckhardt, Homiletisches Reallexikon nebst Index Rerum, S-T (St. Louis: Success Printing Co., 1914), pp. 837-906.

in the Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod.

Only one sentence in this document is dedicated to the subject of baptism and not one word is said about baptism being applied to children.⁴

Of course this does not mean that the Missouri Synod has had no position on infant baptism. But it does indicate that in our past attempts to state our doctrinal position over against those of other Lutheran groups, it was thought that agreement on this matter was sufficient for church fellowship.

At the present time in the Missouri Synod, there seems to be a surge of interest in the doctrine of baptism. Dr. Martin Marty has published a book on baptism.⁵ In an interview, Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan mentions the importance of baptism and urges further study in this matter. "I believe that baptism is the most revolutionary and most dynamite-loaded doctrine in the book. I don't think any of us are really willing to face what we mean by this doctrine and its ecumenical implications."⁶

Perhaps nothing is having as great an influence within the Missouri Synod in regard to the prominence of the doctrine of infant baptism as is the published doctrinal essay of Dr. Arthur C. Repp, "Reconstructing Confirmation for Our Day."⁷ This essay shows that baptism remains the

⁴Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 11.

⁵Baptism (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1962).

⁶"Dr. Pelikan Discusses Current Church Issues," The Quad, XI (October 12, 1962), 3.

⁷"Reconstructing Confirmation for Our Day," The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Seventy-Sixth Convention Proceedings of the Western District, June 12-16, 1961 ([St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961]), pp. 26ff.

important moment in life and this place should not be surrendered to the ceremony of confirmation.

Other indications of the lively interest in baptism within the Missouri Synod today are the essay presented by Professor Willis E. Laetsch to the regular convention of this body in 1962 in Cleveland⁸ and a recent article by Professor Harry G. Coiner in the Concordia Theological Monthly.⁹

The doctrine of baptism, so far as its origins, essence, and effects are concerned, meets the point of greatest difficulty when it is applied to infants. From an historical viewpoint, it was the refusal of the Anabaptists of the sixteenth century to recognize the validity of baptisms given in infancy which was the cause of the first major dissension among the Protestants. Even today Christendom may be divided into those groups who baptize infants and children and those who do not. But apart from those groups which follow the Anabaptists, infant baptism is practiced quite commonly among the larger church groups. Though Roman and Greek Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists may not baptize children for the same reasons, still the fact stands out boldly that all these groups do baptize children in infancy and each will usually recognize the validity of the baptism administered by the other.

While the practice of baptizing infants may be common to most of Christendom, there is nevertheless no unity concerning the raison d'être. Already the Lutheran dogmaticians of Orthodoxy were aware of the

⁸"The Doctrine of Baptism," The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, Proceedings of the Forty-Fifth Regular Convention, Cleveland, Ohio, June 20-29, 1962 (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, [1962]), pp. 25ff.

⁹"The Inclusive Nature of Holy Baptism in Luther's Writings," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (November, 1962), 645-657.

differences of approach among Roman Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists.¹⁰ However, these men were not faced with differences of approach within the walls of Lutheranism itself. The various reasons for infant baptism offered by Lutherans as well as non-Lutherans have not been the subject of a sufficiently comprehensive study and critique written from a confessional Lutheran point of view. Such differences are not adequately brought out in the important dogmatical writings of the Missouri Synod. Nothing is available to the student in this area now.

There is no doubt that infant baptism as a subject of study and investigation will become more important. This is due in part to the lively interest in the Missouri Synod today. Another significant fact which cannot be overlooked is that today many prominent well-known German Protestant theologians are producing scholarly works which seriously question whether infant baptism is actually found in or is in accordance with the New Testament. Those who take a negative position on this question are none other than Karl Barth,¹¹ Kurt Aland,¹² and Johannes Schneider.¹³ Taking the affirmative is Joachim Jeremias.¹⁴ Barth has

¹⁰ Johann Andreas Quenstedt, Theologia Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologicum (Lipsiae: Thomas Fritsch, 1715), pp. 1126ff.

¹¹Die kirchliche Taufe (München: C. Kaiser, 1947).

¹²Die Säuglingstaufe im Neuen Testament und in der alten Kirche; eine Antwort an Joachim Jeremias (München: C. Kaiser, 1961).

¹³Die Taufe im Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1952).

¹⁴Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries, translated by David Cairns (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960).

gone so far as to say that baptism should be discontinued. In this he is followed by his son Marcus Barth who has collected and published the New Testament evidence favoring such a position.¹⁵

It is difficult to say with certainty whether or not the present writings in the Missouri Synod and in the rest of Protestantism concerning the doctrine of baptism are necessarily related phenomena or just coincidental. Whatever the immediate origins of this interest in baptism are, it remains true that most pastors will, at one time or another, give serious thought to the questions of why children should be baptized and what baptism works in them. Such thought may be aroused by certain Baptist opinions prevalent in an area or by literature dealing with the matter. Since it is not possible to point directly to any specific command concerning the baptism of infants or to any specific and certain example of their being baptized in the New Testament, the practice of and the reasons offered for infant baptism have often been not only intriguing to schooled theologians, but downright discomfoting.

This work is not written primarily to give answers to the difficulties which might arise in connection with infant baptism. This it might do incidentally and this is certainly the author's wish. What is endeavored here is to analyze the doctrine of infant baptism as it appeared in the nineteenth century in Germany, the land of Luther. In so far as we are dealing with a limited period of time within certain defined geographical limits, our work is historically orientated. But in so far as the various teachings on infant baptism are analyzed, this task belongs to that of

¹⁵Die Taufe - ein Sakrament?: Ein exegetischer Beitrag zum Gespräch über die kirchliche Taufe (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1951).

systematic theology. However, the author wishes that the end result will be the edifying of the church by sharpening its insights into the doctrine of infant baptism so that what is Scriptural may be differentiated from that which is not.

The nineteenth century Protestant theology of Germany in regard to infant baptism offers a large field of investigation. Previous centuries since the Lutheran Reformation were not marked by the same diversity of theological thought as was the nineteenth century. Though no century has complete unanimity in theological thought, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were monolithic in comparison with the eighteenth. The age of the Lutheran Confessions¹⁶ and Lutheran Orthodoxy¹⁷ was a time when Lutheran theologians were agreed that baptism was a means of grace for children by which the word of God worked faith in them. Because of original sin children stood in need of the redemption which baptism offered them.

Even though perhaps there was no formal change in the doctrine of infant baptism during the age of Lutheran Pietism at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, there did arise a different emphasis. With the "conversion theology" of Philip Spener, the moment and efficacy of infant baptism were minimized and the emphasis was placed on the personal articulate confession of faith made

¹⁶Edmund Schlöcker, Theology of the Lutheran Confessions, translated from German by Paul F. Koehnke and Herbert J. A. Bouman (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), pp. 151ff. Also excellent in this same connection is Karl Brinkel, Lehre Luthers von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufe (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958). This is a very useful work showing that Luther held to the doctrine of infant faith.

¹⁷Quenstedt, loc. cit. and Johann Gerhard, Loci Theologici, edited by Ed. Preuss (Berolini: Gust. Schlawitz, 1866), IV, 355ff.

later in life at confirmation.¹⁸ In the eighteenth century Pietism was replaced by Rationalism which was closely related to the philosophy of Idealism. During the age of Rationalism, baptism was valued less. Concerning this Dr. Repp writes, "Many of the Rationalists regarded confirmation as the second half of baptism, in fact, the more important part."¹⁹

Our study begins with the first years of the nineteenth century when the Rationalism of the eighteenth century was still the outstanding theological influence in Protestant Germany. Whereas the previous three centuries of German Protestant theology were marked by large theological schools of thought, Lutheran Confessionalism, Lutheran Orthodoxy, Lutheran Pietism, and then finally Rationalism, each arising in its turn and being the most influential in its time, the nineteenth century would be marked by diversity. No one theological school would enjoy the same prominence or influence as had been the case in the previous three centuries.

The heritage of the eighteenth century, Rationalism, was to wane as a prominent school of theological thought in the nineteenth century. In 1817 Claus Harms wrote his Ninety-Five Theses against Rationalism. Friedrich Schleiermacher endeavored to replace the reason of the Rationalists with his christliches Gefühl and frommes Bewusstsein. A Confessional Lutheran identity overwhelmed by the wave of Rationalism in the eighteenth century came into prominence again when the Alt-lutheraner

¹⁸ Repp, op. cit., pp. 35f.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 36f.

were forced by reasons of conscience to separate from the state-related church in 1817 and to form an independent organization in 1830. Part of this growing confessional awareness and resistance to Rationalism was the Saxon immigration to America which marked the beginnings of what was later to become The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod.

It might be said that the theology of nineteenth century Germany was influenced by both Rationalism and the earlier Lutheranism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While theology endeavored to take seriously into consideration the older Lutheran theology, it never did so at the expense of the principles gained from Rationalism. Actually every German school of theology in this time could be measured along the line between the older Lutheran theology and Rationalism. Each school approximated one end of the line or the other. Typical of this mediating spirit was the Erlangen School of Theology. This school worked with matter taken from the older Lutheranism, but its principles were those of Rationalism.²⁰

The end of the century saw the rise of the importance of the historical movement in theology. This movement was not confessionally oriented as the Erlangen School tried to be. A reaction to the historical movement was a type of Biblicism.

It is through these historical lines that our discussion of infant baptism will be led. Since there was no Baptist theologian of any import writing in Germany at this time, our analyses will of necessity be limited to those theologians who knew and accepted the practice of baptizing

²⁰H. Grasz, "Erlanger Schule," Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by Kurt Galling (Dritte, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958), II, 566ff.

young children. In certain cases the practice was questioned, but never was it forthrightly condemned. Even though the Baptist point of view is not included, it will be shown how great the diversity of bases, reasons, and effects of infant baptism really was in the land of Luther three centuries after the Reformation.

As mentioned previously, our task is not only historical in that various doctrines of infant baptism will be faithfully reproduced, but it will be systematic in that these doctrines will be analyzed and critically evaluated. All critical theological evaluation must be made in respect to given norms, standards, and criteria. The point of judgment for evaluating the doctrine of infant baptism in the German Protestant theology of the nineteenth century will be the doctrinal position of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod. Of course this position endeavors to be that of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. It is also that of the Lutheran Orthodox theologians of the seventeenth century. This theology has been faithfully reproduced in the writings of Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, Franz Pieper, and other teachers of the Missouri Synod.

Briefly put, infant baptism as understood by the Missouri Synod is that together with water the word of God is applied to infants. This word of God is able to engender faith in the child. By faith created through the means of baptism, the child is able to grasp the merits of Christ and thus it is saved from original sin and from the sins for which he later becomes responsible. This understanding of baptism is based on Matthew 28:19f., where children are to be understood as being objects of the Lord's command to baptize all nations, and John 3:5, where all flesh stands in need of redemption by baptism. The doctrine of infant faith

closely connected with infant baptism is taught by the pericopes of Jesus' blessing the children and other portions of the Scriptures. Many other Biblical references are used in the matter of infant baptism.²¹

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod has to this day remained faithful to this understanding of infant baptism. Dr. Arthur Repp, a present-day theologian of the Missouri Synod, writes as follows:

When the Christian Church in obedience to her Lord's command baptizes a child, she is privileged to perform a stupendous miracle in His name. In Holy Baptism God seizes the unwilling sinner and makes him His own. In this act the sin, together with the old man, dies an instant death. God creates in the infant the miracle of faith and gives him new life. In Baptism the child is born anew and is clothed with the righteousness of Christ. God says, in effect, "You are My child, My own, through the merits of My Son."²²

This is a clear example of the Lutheran concept of infant baptism. Infant baptism is commanded by the Lord. The child is not merely passive in baptism, but it actually resists the grace offered it in baptism. By the application of baptism sin is destroyed, faith is created, and the new life begun. This is a logical order, of course, and not a temporal one. At the moment of baptism all these great things happen.

The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod is very explicit in its doctrine of infant baptism in stating that infants can and do believe through the word of God working in baptism. This has been the teaching of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, the Lutheran dogmaticians of the seventeenth century, and the later Confessional Lutheran theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

²¹Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1920), III, 325ff.

²²Repp, op. cit., p. 42.

In his essay on baptism delivered before and accepted by The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod in Cleveland in 1962, Professor Laetsch quoted from Luther's Small Catechism and an article of Dr. J. T. Mueller, thus leaving no doubt concerning what the Missouri Synod teaches on this matter today.

Is Baptism then a mechanical operation? Does it save automatically, by a sort of magical power?

Again Scripture is clear, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore Dr. Luther says, "It is not the water indeed that does (these great things in Baptism), but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water." This is again where human reason admits an impossibility, especially with regard to the possibility of faith in infants.

Says Dr. J. T. Mueller in an essay in The Abiding Word (Vol. II, p. 407): "But how (we ask) can little children have faith which trusts such word of God in the water? Believing adults, of course, by faith trust the baptismal Gospel. But how can infants have faith? Here, again, the fact that Baptism is essentially Gospel helps us understand the problem. The Gospel on one hand, is the object of faith, that is, the foundation upon which our faith rests. Our faith thus rests upon the precious Gospel fact that Christ died for our sins (Rom. 4:25). But, on the other hand, the Gospel is also the means by which faith is engendered in the hearts of men (Rom. 10:17), since the Holy Ghost is always and efficaciously connected with the Gospel (1 Cor. 2:4,5). And so through the Gospel, connected with Holy Baptism, the Holy Spirit works and preserves an active, direct faith in little children that are baptized, while He strengthens the faith of believing adults that are baptized. We cannot, of course, understand this divine operation of the Holy Spirit in little children, just as little as we can understand how sleeping adults, or adults in a coma, are kept by the Holy Ghost in saving faith. However, we are not to understand the mysteries of faith but only to believe them (John 20:29). In the realm of the spiritual, reason must forever remain silent, as Luther affirms time and again."²³ —

Valuable in this connection is an excerpt from Dr. Repp's essay in which the doctrine of infant faith is related to the confession of faith in the rite of baptism.

²³Laetsch, op. cit., pp. 26f.

At the time of Holy Baptism the sponsors confessed, in the child's stead, the faith which the Holy Spirit created by the water and the Word. The fact that the agenda may call for a confession of faith a moment before the actual sacrament is administered is immaterial. The entire rite is one act. We know that the Holy Spirit will work faith in the child. Whether we confess this faith before or after it is engendered is immaterial. More important than this is the fact that this confession of faith expresses the faith into which the church is embracing the child through his Baptism. Furthermore, the confession of faith of the sponsors is also made in the name and in the stead of the child. This confession is as valid as though the child made it himself.²⁴

The lines and boundaries for our study of infant baptism have been drawn. They are the Protestant German theologians of the nineteenth century. Our presuppositions have been stated. They are those of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, the theologians of the age of Lutheran Orthodoxy, and the fathers and teachers of the Missouri Synod.

Perhaps the title The Doctrine of Infant Baptism in the German Protestant Theology of the Nineteenth Century appears to be too inclusive. It is not the author's intention to present and analyze the understanding of infant baptism of every theologian who belongs to this period. Such a task would be as mammoth as it would be redundant. The important dogmatical works of this century as well as monographs dealing specifically with baptism have been studied. Those works chosen for discussion were not only representative of whole areas of theological thought, but their treatments were adequate in that they explicitly developed what elsewhere was only implicitly stated. The writings of some theologians not so well known today have been included because they more fully cover a thought not so adequately discussed by the more famous representatives of the same theological school.

²⁴Repp, op. cit., p. 25.

In order to make the present work as comprehensive as possible, we begin with two theologians who were active early in the nineteenth century, Julius Wegscheider, a Rationalist, and Franz Reinhard, a Supranaturalist. Though Rationalism and Supranaturalism are separate theological phenomena, it is recognized that these two schools of theology have much in common with one another. Both are products and the last vestiges of the age of Enlightenment, when philosophical Idealism and theological Rationalism appeared.²⁵ The affinity between Rationalism and Supranaturalism is also evident in their doctrines of infant baptism.

Though particulars might differ from man to man within these schools, there was agreement in asserting that baptism was for infants a means by which they were made members of the Christian society. Within the fellowship of this society, the child upon reaching maturity could make decisions concerning religion. Baptism was in no way miraculous for the child. He was not given the gift of faith nor made a member of Christ's body. Infant baptism had become secularized.

For the Rationalists and Supranaturalists no positive proof for infant baptism could be found in the Scriptures. Baptism was not a necessity for children, since original sin with its threat of damnation was denied. In bringing salvation to the child, baptism could be of no help since it was not a means of grace. Other reasons and benefits were offered in favor of continuing the practice. Since it is not expressly forbidden in the Scriptures, and since it has the witness of the post-apostolic church, there exists no reason for not continuing the practice.

²⁵Horst Stephan, Geschichte der Deutschen Evangelischen Theologie Seit dem Deutschen Idealismus, edited by Martin Schmidt (Zweite Neubearbeitete Auflage; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960), pp. 61ff.

So far as benefits were concerned, infant baptism was not completely without them. However, these benefits were connected with the Christian fellowship into which baptism was the initiation and not with the act of baptism itself. The moment of baptism had immediate benefit for the adult observers and participants, but it had no tangible benefit for the person of the child.

Also belonging to the early nineteenth century was the influential theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher. As in other doctrines so also in infant baptism, his theology held great sway during the rest of the century. However, Schleiermacher's basic presuppositions in theology were apparently but not actually different from the Rationalism which he sought to replace.²⁶ This is also true in the matter of infant baptism, which resembles that of Rationalism very closely. For him there were no Biblical reasons for continuing the practice of baptizing infants, and he even suggested that it could be discontinued without any detriment to child or church. Infant baptism had significance only in so far as it brought the child into a fellowship where Christian education would later be available to it. Baptism administered to infants was considered an incomplete baptism unless it was complemented by the act of confirmation.

Already in the beginning of the nineteenth century certain basic presuppositions concerning infant baptism were set forth which were to have validity throughout the rest of the theology of that century with the exception of the strictly Confessional Lutheran theologians. The denial of infant faith in connection with baptism and the necessity of confirmation for correcting this lack in baptism had almost universal

²⁶Ibid., p. 108.

acceptance. The idea that Scripture could not be used in establishing infant baptism due to the lack of evidence in this area was also common to much of the nineteenth century German Protestant theology.

In the middle of the century the Erlangen school had considerable theological sway. Here was a school combining Lutheranism with elements taken from Roman Catholicism, Romanticism, and other philosophies.²⁷ For the theologians belonging to or closely connected with the Erlangen school, baptism was regarded as an act on the body or nature of the body by which the "seed of faith" was planted. To the child was given the cause of faith, the Holy Spirit, and the effects of faith, forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life, but not the act of faith itself. Baptism was said to have a natural effect apart from faith. Here there is a resemblance to the traditional Roman Catholic teaching on baptism. Like the Rationalists and Schleiermacher, these theologians insisted that faith could only be produced by the audible word in persons who were rationally conscious. Prominent in their understanding of baptism was the word order of Matthew 28:19 where both baptism and teaching were regarded as being necessary in bringing the entire salvation to the individual. Baptism brought the gifts of salvation and teaching in the word worked faith. The working of one could not be ascribed to the other. Therefore salvation in the fullest sense could only be ascribed to a person who had been both baptized and had been taught the word by which he could come to faith. Those not belonging here were children who had only been baptized but not taught in the word and adults having faith through the word, but still unbaptized. Both baptism and faith worked

²⁷ Ibid., p. 179.

through the word were considered sine qua non for salvation. Theologians included here are Johannes Hbfling, Hans Lassen Martensen of Denmark, Gottfried Thomasius, Carl von Zezschwitz, Ernst Hory, Rudolph Rocholl, and Franz Delitzsch.

At the end of the century there appeared an understanding of infant baptism very similar to that of the Rationalists and Schleiermacher. This understanding did not go as far as they did in making infant baptism virtually ineffectual in the matter of the child's salvation, but it did not surrender their Rationalistic presuppositions. These presuppositions were that infant baptism was without Biblical evidence and that it was incapable of working faith. From the positive side it was said that baptism did give forgiveness and salvation to the child, but these benefits could only be enjoyed when the preached word would create faith in the children. This concept differed from that of the Erlangen school in that in no way was the person or nature of the child in the least way affected. Blessings were predicated of the child without any change whatsoever in the child's person. They made the distinction between the objective possession of blessings through baptism and the subjective possession through faith created by the audible word. To be discussed here are Ernst Bunke, a prolific protagonist for his understanding of infant baptism, Reinhold Seeberg, and Adolf Schlatter.

Closely connected with these men but requiring separate consideration because of the uniqueness of his position is the Biblicist, Hermann Cremer. His understanding of infant baptism was only a projection of his concept of the Pauline idea of forensic justification.²⁸ For him personal

²⁸ Ibid., p. 270.

justification in the individual occurs before faith arises. When this principle was applied to the baptized child, the child was endowed with every blessing of baptism without being personally changed. This was the result of his radical concept of forensic justification applied to infant baptism. In this connection we have included analyses of the two editions of Cremer's Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe published in the years around the turn of the century. These editions are of interest since it seems that Cremer changed his position on the doctrine of infant faith in connection with baptism. A denial of infant faith in the first edition is apparently reversed in later editions. A close study of these editions will reveal that the change is more apparent than real. Closely connected with Cremer was Paul Althaus, Sr.

When such a topic as infant baptism is presented over the length of one entire century, a century which was known more for its diversity than for its unanimity of theological thought, a great caution must be taken in establishing conclusions which might be said to be valid for all. On the positive side it may be said that all regarded baptism as effecting association with the outward church. Through this association the child would come into contact with the preached word and faith would be engendered. From a positive side nothing more can be stated which would have common validity for all. Even stating that baptism effects association with the outward church is put forth with the reservation that in no way was the concept of church unanimously agreed upon by these theologians.

From the negative side more can be asserted than from the positive. (1) Without exception it was denied that baptism was capable of creating a faith which trusts solely in the merits of Christ. This was something

which only the spoken word could do. Thus baptism in regard to the creation of faith was impotent in comparison with the word. (2) Since children are not sufficiently conscious or rational, they are not capable of coming to faith. Faith is possible only in rational conscious individuals. From this description children are excluded. (3) Since children are without faith at the time of their baptism, because this sacrament is incapable of creating it and because they are incapable of receiving it, their baptism is incomplete. (4) This incompleteness is corrected only when the child is able to come to faith through the spoken word. This coming to faith was usually connected with the profession of faith made at confirmation.

Another principle enjoying common but not complete acceptance in the Protestant theology of that time was the lack of Biblical evidence for baptizing infants. Of the theologians here discussed only those belonging to the Erlangen school saw any positive evidence in this regard. But even among them an extensive discussion of this matter is missing.

Even though it is not our task to present the more remote causes for these principles common to the understanding of infant baptism in this period, certain connections, however, with the times in general can be established. The denial of the faith-creating powers of baptism and the assigning of them to the word alone, together with the denial of the ability of infants to have faith, was the result of Humanism and the philosophy of Idealism which had reached their zenith in the German intellectual life in the eighteenth century. These phenomena were closely related with theological Rationalism, an offspring of the age of the Enlightenment. Humanism and Idealism attributed knowledge only to the

conscious individual. Knowledge was communicable through the senses to the intellect. Since baptism appeared to communicate no knowledge through the usual channels to the intellect and since children were considered to be without reason, it was naturally concluded that they were not capable of faith. According to Karl Brinkel such concepts are foreign to the Bible and to the theology of the Lutheran Reformation.²⁹

The denial of positive Scriptural evidence for infant baptism is closely connected with the historical critical examination of the Scriptures so common in the last century. Even this phenomenon in theology was only a product of the age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century Rationalism.

These principles connected with the denial of infant faith and the Scriptural bases of infant baptism were in reality the same presupposition which led the Anabaptists to deny the validity of infant baptism and the Socinians to treat it as an adiaphoron.³⁰ Before the nineteenth century the Roman Catholics, the Calvinists, the Socinians, Anabaptists, and Arminians, had all denied that children were capable of coming to faith through the act of baptism.³¹

²⁹Brinkel, *op. cit.*, p. 95. "Fragen wir danach, was sich eigentlich in diesen, sich auf das Bewusstsein des Menschen berufenden Einwänden gegen Luthers Lehre von der fides infantium für ein Denken kundtut, so ergibt sich, dass es letztlich nicht in biblischen und reformatorischen Aussagen, sondern in idealistisch-humanistischen Voraussetzungen gründet. Es ist der Humanismus und Idealismus, der dem 'bewussten' Geist des Menschen zuerkennt. Es ist Schleiermacher gewesen, bei dem in der Theologie ein solches Denken eine besondere Zuspitzung erfahren hat. Schleiermacher versteht den Glauben vornehmlich als eine Beziehung des Subjektes Mensch auf Gott, wird doch nach ihm der Mensch in seinem Selbstbewusstsein Gottes inne und eben 'bewusst'. Nach ihm fällt daher in einem Menschen, in dem das B[c]wusstsein noch nicht bestimmt genug auseinander treten, auch ein 'Gottesbewusstsein' noch gänzlich aus."

³⁰Quenstedt, *op. cit.*, p. 1125.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 1142.

This same denial of infant faith with its varied ramifications became the common presupposition in the understanding of infant baptism in the German Protestant theology of the nineteenth century. This was a theology which regarded itself as standing in the Lutheran heritage. However, in the matter of infant baptism, the presuppositions of Luther's opponents, the Anabaptists, were accepted as true. It now becomes our task to show how those theologians who were consciously in the Lutheran tradition, defended the practice of infant baptism even though they accepted the presuppositions of those who denied its validity.

Certain prominent theologians belonging to the nineteenth century who are not included in this work are the so-called Confessional Lutheran theologians or, as they were otherwise called, Repristinatiotheologen. The theologians belonging to this school were interested in restoring the Lutheran Confessional and Orthodox theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Belonging here are Friedrich Philippi, Carl F. W. Walther, Adolf Hoenecke, and Franz Pieper, all of whom were born in Germany. The American-born theologian, Charles Porterfield Krauth, rightfully belongs with these men. These men, though acquainted with Rationalism, did not adopt any of it into their theology. Rationalism was rejected in favor of the older Confessionalism.

Though a presentation and an analysis of their writings on infant baptism are not included in this work, it does not mean that the positions of these men are overlooked and disregarded. Quite the opposite is true. Because their understanding of infant baptism is that of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod to this very day, as outlined above, their positions are in fact the very presuppositions upon which the present writer analyzes the German Protestant theology of the last century. Of course,

as mentioned above, these presuppositions are none other than those of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and Lutheran Orthodoxy.

THE LUTHERAN POSITION ON INFANT BAPTISM

Introduction

John Luther King, in his pamphlet concerning baptism, What is Baptism, published in 1807, was the earliest author to discuss the sacrament as the most prevalent use of his day. Because of the doctrinal attitude the sacrament was given little value and not valued very highly. In order to correct an attitude of indifference in regard to the use of infant baptism, a royal decree was issued in Prussia on January 25, 1802, requiring every father to have his child baptized within six weeks after the birth. Should the father have failed to comply with this regulation, he would have been declared insane and the child would have been taken away from him and given to a guardian.¹

Beginning at the beginning of the nineteenth century, two new theological schools, the Rationalists and Supranaturalists. These schools were so closely related that between them they gave birth to a third school of theology which was the name of both, Rationalistic Supranaturalism or Supranaturalistic Rationalism.² These schools did favor the practice of infant baptism. This does not mean that their logical method tells us in fact we should baptize infants because of the alleged infidelity of the parents. But the opposite is true.

¹ John Luther King, What is Baptism (Philadelphia: How and Why, 1807), p. 5.

² Cf. also, Methodism in America, by James M. Smith, published by the Methodist Book Concern, 1856, p. 10. The Rationalist and Supranaturalist, edited by John Luther King, 1807, and republished in 1856, p. 10. Also, Methodism in America, by James M. Smith, 1856, p. 10.

CHAPTER II

RATIONALISM AND SUPRANATURALISM

Introduction

Adam Theodor Lehms said in his monograph concerning baptism, Ueber die Taufe, published in 1807, that the Socinian attitude towards the sacraments was the most prevalent one of his day. Because of the Socinian attitude the sacraments were given little value and not esteemed very highly. In order to correct an attitude of indifference in regard to the use of infant baptism, a royal decree was issued in Prussia on February 25, 1802, requiring every father to have his child baptized within six weeks after its birth. Should the father have failed to comply with this regulation, he would have been declared insane and the child would have been taken away from him and given to a guardian.¹

Prominent at the beginning of the nineteenth century were two theological schools, the Rationalists and Supranaturalists. These schools were so closely related that between them they gave birth to a third school of theology which bore the name of both, Rationalistic Supranaturalism or Supranaturalistic Rationalism.² These schools did favor the practice of baptizing infants. This does not mean that their attitude towards infant baptism was that of the older Lutheran theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Quite the opposite is true.

¹Adam Theodor Albert Lehms, Ueber die Taufe (Heidelberg: Mohr und Zimmer, 1807), p. 7.

²H. Holwein, "Rationalismus II. Rationalismus und Supranaturalismus, kirchengeschichtlich," Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by Kurt Galling (Dritte, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1961), V, 791ff. Hereafter this edition is cited as RGG.

Rationalism and Supranaturalism adopted the very presuppositions of Socinianism in denying that infant baptism had Scriptural bases and that baptism was a means of grace for creating faith in children.³ Though the Socinian presuppositions were accepted as true, the Rationalists and Supranaturalists did contend for the baptizing of infants. This was urged, however, for other reasons.

So far as the child was concerned its baptism was regarded as a ceremony of initiation into the Christian society. As the child grew older, he would find this society to be advantageous for him in making decisions about religion. It may be said that infant baptism had become secularized in that no specific religious benefits were given to the baptized child. In no way was the child changed or given anything personally. All benefits were attached to his reaching maturity within the Christian fellowship.

Actually the rite or ceremony of infant baptism had more significance for those watching than for him receiving it. It was claimed that certain religious feelings were stirred up within the observers and thus they would also remember that they were also initiated into this same society.

Since the Rationalists and Supranaturalists denied that infant baptism had any sure Scriptural foundation, they had to establish it on extrabiblical material. Their favorite argument was a negative one. Just as Christ did not command it, so also He did not forbid it. Therefore there can be nothing wrong in continuing the practice, although it is not mandatory. Another basis for infant baptism was said to be the practice of the ancient church. Here there could be no historical doubt that

³Johann Andreas Quenstedt, Theologia Didactico-Polemica sive Systema Theologicum (Lipsiae: Thomas Fritsch, 1715), p. 1125.

it was practiced. Such an argument is not Biblical but purely historical.

The Rationalists and Supranaturalists did take a negative attitude for reasons previously offered for the practice of infant baptism. Their negative principles may be succinctly grouped in six points. (1) There is no reference to infant baptism in the Scriptures by way of command, example, or deduction. (2) The baptism of the New Testament is for adults only. (3) Faith is created by the spoken or preached word only, and not by baptism. Baptism has no power to regenerate and thus bring a person to faith. (4) Since children are not sufficiently conscious or rational, they are not able to come to faith through the preached word. (5) Because children are baptized without having faith, their baptism is to be considered as incomplete. (6) This incompleteness is corrected when the child comes to faith through the spoken word.

This last point concerning the correcting of the incompleteness of infant baptism has two ramifications. First of all, since the baptism is incomplete, it is necessary that at the baptism a pledge be given by either parents or sponsors that the child will come into contact with the preached word. Therefore the child will be given an opportunity to come to faith and thus correct the incompleteness of his baptism. Secondly, the correcting of this incompleteness is often associated with the rite of confirmation. At this time the child can make his own confession of faith.

These negatively stated principles are specifically singled out here since they constantly reappear throughout the German Protestant theology of the nineteenth century. There were certainly many exceptions to the principles which denied the Scriptural foundations of infant baptism. But concerning the principles dealing with the efficacy of baptism for children in creating faith and its being incomplete there were no

exceptions save the Repristination theologians. Already in the first years of the century, the presuppositions common to the entire century were set forth.

To present the situation of Protestant theology in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Julius Wegscheider has been chosen from the Rationalists and Franz Reinhardt from the Supranaturalists.

Julius August Ludwig Wegscheider

Wegscheider's Institutiones Theologiae Christianae Dogmaticae was the leading dogmatics during the last generation of Rationalism. Between 1815 and 1844 it appeared in eight editions.⁴ The space which Wegscheider devotes to infant baptism is not very extensive. Nevertheless his views are important, since they reappear in part in most of the nineteenth century theology. These views would include the lack of Biblical command or example concerning infant baptism; the denial of infant faith; and the giving of a guarantee at the time of baptism that the word will be applied to the child from which faith will arise.

Wegscheider introduces his discussion on baptism by dissociating himself from what he calls the older theologians. Undoubtedly he is referring to the Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their views are said to be superstitious and contrary to what the New Testament says about baptism. What the New Testament says about baptism's essence and effects refers to adults only. To say that baptism has any magical or supernatural force is contrary to what we know from both

⁴Horst Stephan, Geschichte der Deutschen Evangelischen Theologie Seit dem Deutschen Idealismus, edited by Martin Schmidt (Zweite Neueditione Auflage; Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1960), p. 64.

reason and experience. When Wegscheider speaks of a magical or supernatural force in baptism, he is referring to the regenerating power of baptism in creating faith in infants. Recently born infants are not capable of having faith of any kind, since the capability of having faith is dependent upon a certain level of consciousness in the individual. Children are said not even to be conscious of themselves. Thus they are excluded from having faith. Therefore the reason for baptizing infants cannot be that baptism gives them faith or that they are able to believe. Neither can infant baptism be defended from the point of view that baptism is absolutely necessary, since the Scriptures know of no absolute necessity concerning baptism. The custom cannot be defended from the family connection which the child born of Christian parents has with them, since the New Testament references to baptism apply to those who have already joined themselves to the fellowship of Christian saints. There is nothing in the Scriptures that says that Jesus ordered baptism for those who would be born within the fellowship of Christians in all of the succeeding generations.⁵

In spite of his critical attitude to the attempts of other theologians to establish baptism and more specifically infant baptism as a church custom, Wegscheider does offer positive reasons for continuing baptism. The main reason he offers in favor of baptism is basically an argument from silence. It is said that just as Jesus did not say that baptism was to be used for all time, neither did He set a certain limitation on the length of time it was to be used. No date was set for the

⁵ Jul. Aug. Lud. Wegscheider, Institutiones Theologiae Christianae Dogmaticae (Editio Tertio Emendata Et Aucta; Halae: Io. Iac. Gebauer et Filii, 1817), pp. 364r.

termination of the practice. If Jesus did not command Christians to baptize children, neither did He forbid them to do so. Further evidence in favor of continuing the baptism of infants is found in the practice of the church where baptism has always been a sign of initiation and regeneration. Therefore baptism may be applied now to those who are joining the Christian society.⁶

Wegscheider does speak of a certain moral efficacy which is attributed to baptism. The moral efficacy of baptism is that baptism gives certain outward advantages and rights to the one who is receiving it. Baptism brings its object into Christendom, civitatem Christianam. Here the individual is brought into contact with Christian fellowship. In this fellowship are those things which will stir up in the baptized person the feelings of religion and virtue. Whether religion and virtue will arise in the baptized person depends completely on the disposition of his mind.⁷

It should be noted that with Wegscheider, baptism is no longer strictly speaking the means of grace. Baptism would better be defined as the means of entering a fellowship where religion can be acquired. Such a concept of baptism might best be called a means to the means of grace. It can be seen how infant baptism could be tolerated by such a scheme of baptism. By being baptized children are not directly participating in salvation, but only in the outward fellowship. When they attain the use of their reason, they can obtain religion for themselves from the Christian fellowship.

⁶Ibid., p. 365.

⁷Ibid.

What has been said up to now has been said about baptism in general. Wegscheider has a special paragraph on infant baptism where he applies to children in a more specific way what he has said about baptism. For him the practice of infant baptism can be defended rationally. The two reasons for maintaining infant baptism are identical with those for maintaining baptism in general. In the first place the Scriptures say nothing against infant baptism. Secondly, the practice of infant baptism received almost universal support in the ancient church. When the church accepts infants into the Christian society through the rite of baptism, it also takes upon itself the responsibility of giving such infants religious instruction at the proper time. Concerning the giving of this instruction, the church is to admonish very seriously both parents and sponsors. All those who participate in the act of baptism are to be reminded of their great responsibilities.⁸

For Wegscheider confirmation is not only a useful, but a necessary ceremony which is to be given in addition to baptism. Baptism as the ceremony of initiation does not have to be repeated. Confirmation gives the youth who has been baptized as an infant the opportunity of being instructed in the Christian religion. Thus he himself can examine the Christian religion of which he was made a member by baptism and can make a decision concerning it.⁹

In reality the person of the child is not immediately affected by the act of baptism. The outward effects of baptism are of no use to the infant until the time of reasoning. In the baptism of infants, the only ones who are immediately affected are the parents and others participating in the act of baptism. It is they who accept the obligations concerning

⁸Ibid., p. 366.

⁹Ibid.

the child's education in the Christian religion.

Also included in the discussion on infant baptism is a section on the rite of baptism itself. It is of prime importance to Wegscheider that infant baptism should be performed only by a called teacher of religion, that is, a pastor. That baptism is to be administered only by the public ministers of religion is significant. First of all it excludes all lay baptism. Secondly, it is in keeping with what Wegscheider has previously said about the absolute necessity of baptism being a fiction of which the New Testament knows nothing. Since baptism is not an absolute necessity and, as we have seen, does not effect the personal salvation of the child being baptized, there is no necessity for an emergency baptism to be performed by a lay person. That baptism should be performed by religionis doctoribus publicis might further indicate that the service is to be performed before the congregation or in the presence of parents and sponsors. This would further substantiate the idea that baptism really has more significance for those observing and participating in the rite of baptism, than for the child being baptized.¹⁰

The act of baptism itself is performed by the application of water with the accompanying recitation of the words of institution in Matthew 28:19. Other customs which are mentioned as being used in connection with baptism but not of equal importance with the act itself are the giving of the name, the signing of the cross, prayers, the imposition of the hands and the benediction. These ceremonies can still have a use in the church. However, exorcism is to be omitted.¹¹ Obviously missing from the enumeration of the ceremonies accompanying baptism are the renunciation and the

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 366f.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 367.

addressing of the questions to the child concerning his faith. Undoubtedly such questions would have no significance, since infant faith is denied. In so far as exorcism is rejected, one wonders why the renunciation and the questions concerning faith are not also rejected. It could not be that they were not known to Wegscheider, since he mentions the ceremonies of the signing of the cross and the laying on of hands. These latter two ceremonies are certainly not as important as the renunciation and the questions. One possible reason for Wegscheider rejecting exorcism, but not even mentioning the renunciation and the questions, is that the former was no longer included in the liturgy of the first part of the nineteenth century; however, the renunciation and the questions were still in common use. Perhaps Wegscheider did not want forthrightly to oppose the accepted liturgical usages of the day. It is obvious if they had been mentioned they would have been rejected together with exorcism. Nevertheless, it is unusual that exorcism, which began to fall into disuse two centuries before the time of Wegscheider, is mentioned and rejected and the questions and answers which were still used in many places at that time are not mentioned. What makes it even more unusual is that all others who treat the baptismal rites in the nineteenth century, treat the problem of the questions. Perhaps the correct solution to their absence is that Wegscheider did not want to oppose a commonly used practice.

Franz Volkmar Reinhard

The Supranaturalist Franz Reinhard gives a more extensive treatment to infant baptism in his Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik, than does the Rationalist Wegscheider. Present in Reinhard's understanding of infant baptism are the same fundamental concepts which are found in Wegscheider.

Here are the principles on which the two theologians agree. Infant baptism cannot be proved by Scriptural command or example. There is no infant faith in connection with infant baptism. As a rite, it was the acceptance of the child into the outward fellowship of the Christian church. Reinhard's discussion is superior, since it spells out more clearly the negative attitude of the Rationalists and Supranaturalists to the Biblical evidence which had been used traditionally in the defense of infant baptism and presents equally well the secular approach which had partly usurped the place of the traditional Biblical one.

Already in his definition of baptism and the holy communion Reinhard gives evidence of a moralistic approach. Baptism and holy communion are defined as religious ceremonies through which God works the betterment of man.¹² It is indicated in such a definition that baptism does not really bring anything new to its object, but it only improves that which is already there.

In a more specific discussion on baptism, this sacrament is called that ceremony through which a person is received into the religious fellowship of Christians. It is a festive act symbolizing the entering of the individual into the Christian religion. In the act of baptism the one who is to be baptized confesses the religion which Christ and His apostles taught. To be baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit means that the baptized confesses solemnly the religion of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. With this confession the baptized person

¹²Franz Volkmar Reinhard, Vorlesungen über die Dogmatik, edited by Johann Gottfried Immanuel Berger (Zweyte verbesserte Auflage; Nürnberg und Salzburg: J. E. Seidelschen Kunst- und Buchhandlung, 1806), pp. 554f.

is given to understand that he accepts this religion out of conviction and that he wants to fulfill the demands of this religion. In accepting these demands the baptized vows that he will tenderly love all who belong to that fellowship which confesses this religion and that he will lead an upright and blameless life according to the precepts of this religion.¹³ In this definition of baptism the promise or the giving of grace is absent. Those acting in baptism are the congregation which receives the baptized person into its fellowship and the baptized person who confesses Christ's religion and vows to live up to its demands. It is nowhere mentioned that God is performing anything on the baptized through this act. Also important in this definition of baptism is that everything should be done with solemnity. This indicates that baptism is not so much a matter of immediate personal salvation as it is of belonging to a society and coming into social association with those who profess the religion of Christ and the apostles.

In being baptized the person is also entitled to the rights and benefits which are bound up with the Christian religion. These rights and benefits would include waiting for the grace of God and for the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus' death with which the hope of eternal salvation is inseparably connected.¹⁴ Baptism does not give the grace of God or the forgiveness of sins, but it puts the person into a relationship where these blessings are obtainable. Here we may use the same critique that was used previously with Wegscheider. Baptism is no longer the means of grace. But since it takes the individual into the

¹³Ibid., p. 566.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 566f.

fellowship where grace is available, it is the means to the means of grace. The real means of grace is the church's fellowship and not baptism.

Also mentioned among the effects of the act of baptism is the stimulation of the memories of those watching. The observers remember their own acceptance into the Christian religion through baptism and all the happiness which they have received by belonging to this religion. Another effect is that these persons receive new incitement to fulfill obediently those duties to which they were obligated in baptism. Last of all, the act of baptism should remind those who have been previously baptized that they should treat the newly baptized as a brother and love him with all affection.¹⁵ That the act of baptism has as much significance for the observers as for the one being baptized is seen in that there is really only one benefit which the baptized received from his act of baptism. This benefit is the enjoyment of those rights and privileges connected with the Christian religion. However, for those watching the act and having been previously baptized there are three distinct effects which the act of baptism has on them, as has just been shown. This again indicates that baptism is not so much a matter of immediate personal salvation as it is an initiatory act into the Christian community. The focus of attention might be the person being baptized, but those who receive the most benefit are those baptized persons watching the act.

Reinhard also looks upon baptism as a covenant with God. Through the festivities of a covenant, God can make clearer to men the duties to which they have bound themselves and can make it seem that they are performing these duties to God. Such festivities as those which are

¹⁵Ibid., p. 567.

connected with a covenant are necessary because so often men can neglect to do their very best. Just as God established a covenant with the people of Israel, so now He establishes one with us. In the covenant of baptism the baptized persons vow to live according to the regulations of the Christian religion. This is supported by 1 Peter 3:21 where $\epsilon\pi\epsilon\sigma\omega\tau\epsilon\gamma\mu\iota$ is to be interpreted as a solemn obligation. What makes the obligation of baptism more solemn in character is the presence of witnesses. This is said by Reinhard to be the origin of sponsors or baptismal witnesses.¹⁶ In defining baptism as a covenant, two concepts which are central to Reinhard's understanding of baptism are again emphasized. In the covenant it is man who is obligating himself. That which makes the covenant distinct in comparison to other types of obligations is that it is solemn. To say that something is solemn means only that it is performed in the presence of others. Thus baptism is not so much a matter of personal salvation as it is a matter of personal obligation in association with the Christian fellowship.

Those who serve as sponsors at infant baptism have a greater responsibility than those who serve in connection with adult baptism. The great responsibility is that the sponsors promise in the name of the child being baptized that he will observe the duties of the Christian religion. It is evident that inarticulate children require more help in their Christian upbringing and development than do adults. The sponsors are to provide for the child's upbringing and development, when his parents can no longer provide for them.¹⁷ Even in the case of the baptism of infants, Reinhard has defined the function of the sponsors in terms of the vow which is laid upon the child through the act of baptism. In that the sponsors are

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 567f.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 568.

to provide for the upbringing of the child, they are helping the child fulfill the vow of baptism. Here it is again evident that two concepts predominate in Reinhard's understanding of baptism. The first concept is that baptism involves an act which we do to God. The second concept is that this act is solemn in nature in that it is performed in the presence of others.

Baptism is never to be applied to anyone by force. It is to be applied only to those who desire it. Should parents desire baptism for their children, they also assume the obligation to care for the maintenance and well-being of the child.¹⁸ Here the idea of obligation is again very prominent.

From the beginning Reinhard sets out to disqualify any evidence from the Scriptures which might be offered in defense of infant baptism. The Scriptures can be of no use in determining whether or not infant baptism is either permitted or commanded as a rite for the church, since they know absolutely nothing about it.¹⁹ In order to substantiate this fact, Reinhard gives his understanding of five passages that have been used in connection with the establishing of infant baptism. These passages which are said to be of no use in the matter of infant baptism are: Matthew 28:19, the baptismal command; the pericopes of the blessing of the children in the Synoptic Gospels; John 3:5, dealing with the necessity of the rebirth; the analogy of circumcision and baptism; and the examples found in Acts where entire households are baptized.

The universality of the command to baptize in Matthew 28:19 cannot be used to establish infant baptism, since it can be said according to the following verse, v. 20, and the parallel passage Mark 16:15f., that

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 570.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 572.

Christ was referring here only to those who would be capable of receiving religious instruction. These of course would be adults.²⁰

The pericopes of Jesus' blessing the children, Matthew 19:14, Mark 10:14, and Luke 18:16, are also not legitimate evidence in the matter of infant baptism. These passages do not actually deal with children, but with those who have minds like children. These are the people who are obedient and docile like children. This passage says nothing about ascribing the kingdom of heaven to children. Therefore it may not be reasoned that since the kingdom of heaven belongs to children, their not being baptized would exclude them from it. These pericopes ascribe the kingdom not to children but to those who are like children.²¹

²⁰ Ibid. The Rationalist Jakob Eckermann also interpreted these passages as referring to adults only. There was for him no command anywhere in the Scriptures to baptize children. Jakob Eckermann, Handbuch für das systematische Studium der christlichen Glaubenslehre (Altona: Johann Friedrich Hammerich, 1803), IV, 327.

²¹ Reinhard, op. cit., p. 572. The same thought is even more positively expressed by Adam Theodor Lehms. He writes: "Auch kann nicht entschieden werden, ob der Erlöser die Kindertaufe ausdrücklich befohlen habe, denn die Stellen, welche die historischen Vertheidiger derselben anführen bewiesen theils die Innigkeit des menschenfreundlichen Mannes, Math. XIX, 14. Marc. X, 14. Luc. XVIII, 16, theils dringen sie auf neuen kindlichen Sinn, den der Mensch gegen die Gottheit nähren soll, auf ein Schuldloswerden mit Bewusstsein, gleichwie Unschuld ohne Bewusstsein der Charakter der Kindheit ist. Marc. X, 15. Luc. XVIII, 17." Op. cit., p. 9.

The Rationalist Eckermann disagrees with Reinhard and Lehms who contend that there is no reference to children in Mark 10:14. For Eckermann this pericope is simply an account of Jesus praying over children and imploring the blessing of God upon them. However, there is no reference to infant baptism here. Op. cit., p. 327.

So far as my studies in the nineteenth century are concerned with infant baptism, I found no theologian who said that Jesus here was instituting infant baptism. This is also true of the Confessional Lutheran theologians. All that was maintained by these passages was that children belong to the kingdom of God. From there it was further deduced that they should then be baptized. Of course even this interpretation of the passage was not allowed by the Rationalist Eckermann, the Supranaturalist Reinhard, or Lehms.

Adam Theodor Lehms was not a Rationalist, but he adopted the

John 3:5f. also does not belong in the discussion concerning infant baptism, since it deals with the change of attitude in adult human beings.²²

The analogy between circumcision and baptism cannot be used as evidence that baptism should be applied to children. If it is to be deduced from the similarity between these two rites that baptism should be given to children, it could also be deduced from the same similarity that baptism like circumcision should not be applied to children of other nations or races. Reinhard claims that what can be proven from analogy in one case can also be proven in the other case.²³

Also of no importance in the question of infant baptism are those passages in Acts where it is reported that entire households were baptized. While it is certain that entire households were baptized, it is uncertain that children were there. If they were there, it is uncertain whether they were baptized. To say that children were baptized on these

principles of Rationalism into his theology, which tried to be that of the Lutheran Confessions. Through his son-in-law Gustav Thomasius he had great influence on the Erlangen school which attempted also to take philosophical considerations into Lutheran theology. E[rich] Beyreuther, "Theodor Lehmus," RGG, 1960, IV, 266. As it will be shown in Chapter IV of this dissertation, certain Rationalistic concepts concerning infant baptism are found in the Erlangen school. Lehmus is an historical link between Rationalism and the Erlangen school.

²²Reinhard, op. cit., pp. 572f. Eckermann understands this passage as not only excluding children, but also adults as a class. For him this refers to the Jews who thought they had a claim to the Messianic kingdom. "Joh. 3, 5. ist schon im dritten Band erklärt. Nicht in Beziehung auf Erbsünde, sondern in Beziehung auf die Meynung der Juden, dasz sie als Juden schon ein Anrecht auf das Messiasreich hätten, sagte Jesus: Ihr Juden könntet nicht Bürger des Reiches Gottes werden, wenn ihr nicht erst eine neue wahre Religion annehmen werdet." Op. cit., p. 328.

²³Op. cit., p. 573.

occasions can be maintained as little as the circumcision of the women in Abraham's house in Genesis 17:27.²⁴ It should be pointed out that in the Acts passages no distinction is made as to sex or age. In Genesis 17:27 only men are mentioned. This is a bad argument on Reinhard's part.

Since Reinhard claims that the correctness of infant baptism cannot be demonstrated from Scriptural evidence, he attempts to establish its correctness on other bases. Three bases are stated in questions to which Reinhard then answers affirmatively. The three definitive questions are: Was it usual to baptize children in the ancient church? Is the custom of baptizing children tolerable to the nature and purpose of baptism in general? Is it necessary and useful to continue the baptizing of children in the church? While the second question remains within the scope of Scripture, the first and the third questions by their very wording must be answered from extrabiblical material.²⁵ Thus the correctness of infant baptism is to be answered not only from the Scriptures, but also from reasons of antiquity and usefulness.

To the first question Reinhard answers that infant baptism was practiced in the ancient church, even though certain objections were raised against it. That infant baptism was occasionally objected to in the ancient church indicates that it was introduced at a previous time. It should also be considered that in general it received common approval

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Ibid.

and only an occasional objection.²⁶

More important than the evidence from the practice of the early church in the matter of establishing the correctness of infant baptism is determining whether or not the nature and purpose of baptism can tolerate the baptizing of infants. According to Reinhard the purpose for Christ's instituting baptism was that it should be useful in a variety of ways and that the baptized should be made to participate in important benefits. If it can be shown that inarticulate children are susceptible to these benefits, then it may be concluded that they may be baptized. The chief benefits of baptism are said to be acceptance into the religious fellowship of Christians. Along with this acceptance one is given outward privileges which go along with belonging to this outward fellowship, as well as the right to await all the benefits of Christ's death. Without further ado Reinhard claims that the ability of children to receive such blessings is selfapparent.²⁷ Undoubtedly here is an attempt to offer

²⁶Ibid. Eckermann mentions that historically speaking it cannot be proved that the apostles did not institute infant baptism or that infant baptism had other than apostolic origins. Infant baptism in the early church was never contested concerning its apostolic origins. At this time there were still those who had known the apostles and could have shown that it was of postapostolic origin.

Eckermann has engaged here in a very subtle argument. With the older Lutheran theologians he was in agreement that infant baptism was practiced by the apostles; however he comes to this conclusion by another way. For the older Lutheran theologians this was a conviction taken from the New Testament. This Eckermann repudiates. The Scriptures say nothing about infant baptism explicitly or by deduction. Eckermann comes to the same conclusion by using extrabiblical postapostolic church history. This is only a species of admitting the use of tradition into a question of church practice. Even though Eckermann comes to the truth of the matter that infant baptism is of apostolic origin, his method is as repugnant as Reinhard's and the Roman Catholics' who have used tradition in determining ecclesiastical practice. Op. cit., pp. 334f.

²⁷Op. cit., pp. 574f. Here also Eckermann is in agreement. "Es ist ferner unleugbar, dasz die christliche Religionslehre die einzigen

Biblical support for infant baptism. Such an attempt fails since it does not recognize baptism as a means of regeneration. Baptism is certainly more than what is stated here.

Last of all, Reinhard says that it is necessary and useful to maintain infant baptism in the church. Infant baptism is to be considered useful because if the acceptance of inarticulate children is to be done in the right way, they are to be received with understanding and affection. Much help, brotherly affection, and love are required in giving guidance to young children. Since infant baptism gives the congregation an opportunity to exercise these spiritual virtues, such a baptism is to be considered useful.²⁸ Infant baptism is considered to be necessary from

wahren Grundsätze aller wahren Religion enthält, und den Menschen zur richtigen Erkenntnisz und würdigen Verehrung Gottes führt. Wie wichtig ist es daher nicht für ein Kind, von seinen frühesten Jahren an, sobald es derselben fähig ist, der Segnungen und Wohlthaten der christlichen Religion theilhaftig zu werden. Und zum Antheil an allen diesen Wohlthaten weilt und führt die Taufe das Kind." Op. cit., pp. 338f.

²⁸Reinhard, op. cit., pp. 575f. In the first decade of the eighteenth century appeared three monographs written on baptism which contained the same thought as expressed here by Reinhard that infant baptism was a useful ceremony for the congregation. The writers of these monographs were Christian Eisenlohr, Adam Theodor Lehms, and Karl Michahelles.

Eisenlohr said that just as infant baptism was the preliminary solemn rite for the benefit of the parents and sponsors, baptism as a religious rite was said to awaken and revive various religious thoughts and emotions in those watching. Secondly, it obligated the parents and sponsors to give the child a Christian education. Thirdly, baptism gives all involved a chance to remember their baptism. Of course the child being baptized must wait till maturity to enjoy this benefit of baptism. Historische Bemerkungen über die Taufe (Tübingen: Jacob Friedrich Herbrandt, 1804), pp. 132ff.

Similarly Lehms quite specifically says that infant baptism is not for the child's benefit, but is for the fulfillment of the adults' needs. "Die Kindertaufe ist also nicht um des Nutzens der Kinder willen vorhanden, sondern nothwendiges Bedürfnis christlicher Frommen, und also nichts sagend den Einwurf, dass Kinder eine so heilige noch verstehen können." Op. cit., p. 93.

Michahelles sees in the rite of infant baptism an opportunity to impress upon parents their ethical obligations to their children. "O wie

the point of view that if it would fall into disuse there would occur a mixture of baptized and unbaptized which would be detrimental to the peace and unity of the family.²⁹ Faith and unbelief cause dissension in a family and not baptism or the lack of it. The sword and enmity between relatives is faith and not baptism as Reinhard claims.

Reinhard claims that infant baptism does not involve any improprieties and is willing to defend the practice. Those improprieties which have been said to be connected with it are merely inventions.³⁰ He deals more extensively with the supposed impropriety of the sponsor's making a promise in the name of the child of which the child knows nothing. If this is to be considered an impropriety, then the making of no contract advantageous to the children should be permitted.³¹ It is further said

viele Eltern bedürfen noch immer einer feyerlichen Aufforderung, ihre Elternpflichten auch in Ansehung der christlich sittlichen Bildungen ihrer Kinder zu erfüllen! Gewisz die Fahrlässigkeit mancher Eltern in Ansehung derselben würde noch weit grösser seyn, wenn nicht noch die Verpflichtung, die sie bey der Taufe ihrer Kinder auf sich genommen haben, dieselben bey sich zu entwickelten Verstandkräften in der Lehre Jesu unterrichten zu lassen, gerade noch so viel Einfluss auf ihr Gemüth behauptete, dasz sie nicht ganz umhin können, dieser Verpflichtung wenigstens einigermassen nachzuleben, und ihren Kindern, sey es auch nur den nothdürftigsten Religionsunterricht angedeyhen zu lassen, der doch immer besser ist als gar keinen." Ueber den christlichen Ritus der Taufe und besonders der Kindertaufe (Nürnberg: Wiegel und Riesner, 1816), pp. 23f.

²⁹Reinhard, op. cit., p. 576.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid. Interesting in this connection is how Michahelles compares infant baptism to an ancient family rite which entitles the family to certain privileges. Unless the children undergo this solemn act, they cannot participate in the privileges of the family. Michahelles points out that the parents would be fools if they did not let their children participate in the rite simply because the children did not have the mentality to estimate the value of the privileges given along with this rite. Op. cit., pp. 23f.

that the baptism of a person does not compel him to remain a disciple of Christ. In reality the baptized person has the freedom of choice in determining whether or not he wants to remain in the Christian fellowship. The church makes it the duty of the baptized youth to test the religion of Jesus with mature reason. Should it appear necessary to the youth after testing the religion of Jesus to leave that fellowship of which he is a member by virtue of his baptism, he may do so.³²

Reinhard concludes his section on infant baptism with a discussion of the doctrine of infant faith, which he subsequently discredits. He is against making infant baptism necessary from the point of view that through it Christ works faith in the soul of the child. The doctrine that infant baptism works faith is said to have arisen when those passages where baptism is designated as the bath of regeneration were applied to children. In turn regeneration has been interpreted as the working and imparting of faith. He mentions that the doctrine of infant faith is repulsive to most theologians and presents great difficulties.³³ In a certain sense Reinhard claims that God can work "faith" in children through baptism. However, this faith which God might be able to work through baptism in children is defined as nothing more than the soul's predisposition for moral perfection in the future and a tendency to do good. Such predisposition for future moral perfection and a tendency in the soul to do good would be a mere capability in the child which would presuppose neither consciousness nor knowledge. However, the mere

³²Reinhard, op. cit., p. 576.

³³Ibid., pp. 576f.

possibility that God can create this type of faith does not prove that he does so.³⁴

Even though Reinhard does not deny that God could create a certain type of faith in infants, he claims that such a doctrine is not taught in the Scriptures. There are five points which he makes against infant faith. (1) Where baptism is called regeneration in the Scriptures, the passage is dealing with adults. Whether it has anything to do with children is another question. (2) According to the use of language, regeneration is an expression which cannot be used of children, but only of adults, who alone have the facilities of inspection and consciousness to better their minds. (3) Luke 1:15 where the leaping of John the Baptist in the womb of his mother Elizabeth is recorded is an exceptional instance and does not belong in the discussion of infant faith. (4) Since the Scriptures do not know of infant baptism, it cannot be known with certainty whether faith is produced by such a baptism. (5) There is no evidence from experience concerning the working of a good disposition in the soul of the child through baptism. Reinhard concludes that infant faith remains an hypothesis which indeed does not involve any contradiction, but the evidence offered in its favor is hardly sufficient to prove it.³⁵

Conclusion

Most prominent in the approach of the Rationalists and Supranaturalists was their negative attitude towards establishing infant baptism on

³⁴ Ibid., p. 577.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 577f.

any firm Biblical basis. Also outstanding was their denial of the saving efficacy of baptism and of the children's ability to have faith. Thus for children there was no personal immediate participation in salvation through baptism.

The main reason offered for baptizing infants was that through this rite the child would become a member of a society which gave its members many advantages. Here the child could learn religion. Since no conclusive evidence could be found in the Scriptures concerning infant baptism, the lack of any negative statements concerning infant baptism and the practice of the ancient church were offered as sufficient reasons for the practice.

It is questionable whether the reasons offered for the continuance of infant baptism by the Rationalists and Supranaturalists are satisfactory. Before them the Anabaptists and the Socinians also denied the Scriptural character of infant baptism and the ability of children to be regenerated. The same can also be said of Friedrich Schleiermacher. But such theologians saw the logical conclusions of their own presuppositions and at least made infant baptism a matter of indifference. Of course the Anabaptists were completely opposed to the practice. Since infant baptism is without Biblical support and since the condition of the child is not changed by baptism according to the Rationalists and Supranaturalists, it is surprising that the practice was even fostered by them.

Of course the reasons which they offered instead must be considered. Infant baptism was said to be a type of initiation into the Christian society where the child could enjoy future benefits. However as an act of initiation is baptism absolutely necessary for infants? Is not the mere fact that children are born of Christian parents sufficient for initiation into the Christian society? It is certainly enough

initiation into the rights of national citizenship. Certainly the Christian society as defined by the Rationalists and Supranaturalists is not any less secular than the civic or national society. In fact under the influence of Hegel the concept of the kingdom of God was so secularized that the kingdom of God, the church, and the state were all virtually identified as being one. As Karl Michahelles points out,³⁶ apart from any spiritual benefit which baptism might or might not give, children should be baptized so that they may enjoy the benefits of citizenship. Of course the identification of the church and state is an outgrowth of the state church concept. Here the church and state are coterminous in respect to the same group of people.

Now if baptism is merely an initiation into this Christian society, would it not be possible for this society to arrange for another mode of initiation or just to let the birth from parents belonging to this society be considered sufficient for membership? Of course this question is not asked by the Rationalists and Supranaturalists. It was asked by the Socinians and the practice of infant baptism fell into disuse.

Another reason for infant baptism is the emotional stimulation which it stirs up among the observers. Is such emotional stimulation sufficient reason for baptizing infants? Would it not be possible to find another ceremony which could perform the same thing, but more effectively?

Also mentioned in behalf of the practice of infant baptism is the great advantage it has for the child in later life since he is made a

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Op. cit., pp. 231.

member of a particular society.³⁷ Of course, as mentioned above, there seems to be no good reason why the society could not change its rules of initiation and let the unbaptized join. After all, it is conceded that any practice of baptism, whether it be adult or infant, has not been commanded for all times by Jesus.

Since the Rationalists and Supranaturalists denied the necessity of baptism from the point of view of salvation, they offered reasons which seem to be of a pragmatic nature. Because pragmatic reasons are based never on eternally true principles derived from divine revelation, but purely on given circumstances, they are always vulnerable to change. Whenever circumstances change, a pragmatic reason must be re-examined. Therefore the reasons offered for infant baptism by the Rationalists and Supranaturalists are far from convincing since they are in part connected with the social and religious circumstances of Germany in the early eighteenth century. If the reasons of group association, group benefits, and group emotions were not offered in support of infant baptism, there would be no reason for continuing the practice.

³⁷This argument for infant baptism shows how secularized the understanding of infant baptism and the church had become at this time. Typical of this approach was Karl Michahelles who urged parents to have their children baptized. With some parents there was no difficulty since they wanted their children to share in the benefits of the Christian religion. Those parents who have no regard for the Christian religion should realize that the state gives many privileges to its Christian citizens which it does not give to non-Christians. Hence even if parents do not care about the spiritual values of Christianity they should have their children baptized in order to enjoy certain civic benefits and privileges. Since this is a crass example of the secularization of infant baptism, the pertinent section is herewith included. "Entweder sind die Eltern der zu taufenden Kinder selbst von dem Werthe und von der Vortrefflichkeit; haben bereits schon in Hinsicht des Geistes und des Herzens die herrlichsten Erfahrungen davon gemacht, sind durch sie aufgekläret am Verstande, gebessert am Herzen und beruhiget am Gemüthe geworden, was Wunder, dass sie

As has been shown, the Rationalists and Supranaturalists discounted any specific Scriptural evidence in support of infant baptism. They claimed that the various passages which had previously been held to teach the universality of the baptismal command, the necessity of baptismal regeneration, and the place of children in the kingdom had nothing to do at all with children. Of course underlying such sentiments was the denial of original sin. When original sin is denied, it is then obsolete to discuss the necessity of baptism, regeneration, or kingdom membership for children. The orientation of the Rationalists and Supranaturalists was completely different from that of Luther who saw that all flesh including children stood in need of regeneration through baptism. An examination of the individual Bible passages would only show the great difference of approach between these men and the Lutheran theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Such an approach is irreconcilable with that of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod which begins its rite of infant baptism by saying that children as all men are born in sin and under the

nicht genug eilen zu können glauben, auch ihre Kinder frühzeitig durch die symbolische Handlung der Taufe zu einer Religion einzuweihen, von welcher sie hoffen, dass sie in der Folge bey ihren Kindern sich durch gleiche segensreiche Wirkungen verherrlichen werde. Oder es ist der andere Falle, dass zwar die Eltern nicht jene erste Ueberzeugung von jenem hohen inneren Werthe der christlichen Religion haben, sich aber dennoch selbst gestehen müssen, dass sie doch wenigstens als Aeuszerliche Bekenner des Christenthums so manche nicht unbedeutende, sondern vielmehr höchst schätzbare Aeuszere Vortheile christlicher Stadtsbürger genieszen, auf die keiner, der Nichtchrist ist, Ansprüche zu machen hat; sollten sie nicht schon aus Sorgfalt für die Aeuszerliche künftige Wohlfahrt ihrer Kinder dieselben bey Zeiten zu einer Religion feyerlich einweihen lassen, wodurch ihnen, abgesehen von ihren höheren inneren Segnungen alle jene Aeuszere Wohlthaten und Vortheile schon von Jugend auf zu Theil werden, die die christlichen Staaten zu genieszen pflegen." Op. cit., pp. 20f.

wrath of God. These children would be lost unless they are delivered by our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁸

In place of firm Biblical evidence for the support of the practice of infant baptism, the Rationalists and Supranaturalists offered the silence of the Scriptures in that matter and the early tradition of the church. Now it is true that the Lutherans have often argued for points which are not specifically stated in the Scriptures. For example, women may attend holy communion, even though there is no one conclusive example of them doing so or any specific command recorded in the New Testament. Such arguments have also been used in regard to infant baptism. Just because such things are not recorded or explicitly commanded does not mean that they are necessarily wrong.

However, on the other side, it must be said that just because something is not recorded in the Scriptures does not make it necessarily right. The argument from silence only has validity when other conclusive evidence from the Scripture has been previously offered and accepted. Only at this time can the lack of a negative statement be admitted into an argument. Women are admitted to holy communion, not just because it is not forbidden, but because there are passages favoring the practice. The same could be said of infant baptism. Infants are baptized not just because Jesus did not forbid it, but because there are many portions of the Scripture which not only suggest the practice but even demand it. But in so far as the Rationalists and Supranaturalists have not offered any prior evidence for the Scriptural character of infant baptism, their

³⁸The Lutheran Agenda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, n.d.), p. 1.

argument from the silence of any negative word from the mouth of Jesus cannot be admitted as a valid argument.

In support of infant baptism they also offered the practice of the early postapostolic church. Eckermann, a Rationalist, will go even so far as to say that it cannot be disproved that the apostles practiced it themselves. Let it first be said that this approach which gives validity to the tradition of the church in matters of practice or doctrine was a result of an historical approach to dogma popularized in the eighteenth century. The historical approach to dogma which saw an historical development of Christian doctrine not only in regard to its form but actually to its very content replaced the former doctrinal approach of the older Lutheranism. Here all doctrines were divinely revealed and were not subject to human development.

When it was contended that doctrines were not divinely revealed in the Scriptures, it then became possible to admit evidence from the postapostolic church in a question concerning the legitimacy of an ecclesiastical practice. Now, the Lutherans have never devalued the witness of tradition either in practice or in doctrine. This is quite evident in the accepted confessions of the Lutheran church. However, this evidence is never put on the same level as the Scriptural. In fact without Scriptural evidence, it is valueless in establishing doctrine or practice. A doctrine may be established where there is only Scriptural evidence, but it may never be established where there is only the postapostolic tradition of the church. This is also true in regard to infant baptism. The witness of the early postapostolic church is highly appreciated in this matter. But of itself it is not conclusive.

This criticism must be leveled against the Rationalists and Supernaturalists. They have offered extrabiblical postapostolic evidence

without first offering conclusive evidence from the apostolic writings. Even Eckermann's contention that infant baptism was probably apostolic in origins because the postapostolic age did not contest it is only a species of the same approach. He concludes that it was apostolic not because of the Scriptural evidence, but because of postapostolic history. He argues back from the postapostolic history of the church to the apostolic history.

Should doctrine ever be admitted into the Lutheran church simply because the Scriptures were silent on the issue and because the early postapostolic church approved of it, the doors would be open for a flood of false doctrines contrary to the Lutheran Confessions. Whenever historical extrabiblical material becomes the basis of Christian doctrines, those doctrines then become subject to variableness since the historical evidence in respect to its quantity and quality may be increased or decreased. The Scriptures as divine revelation do not tolerate such variableness in Christian doctrine.

The two main arguments of the Rationalists and the Supranaturalists for infant baptism are the usefulness of this rite for all concerned³⁹

³⁹The concepts concerning infant baptism found in the early nineteenth century Rationalism and Supranaturalism were already present in the previous century. The most prominent school of theological Rationalism in Germany in the last half of the eighteenth century was the Neologen. Johannes Christoph Doederlein, a member of the theological school of Neologie, published a dogmatical work which appeared in six editions between 1780 and 1797. In this work Doederlein has the same basic arguments for and against infant baptism as do Wegscheider, Reinhard, Eckermann, Eisenlohr, Michahelles, and Lehmus. Doederlein dismisses the necessity of infant baptism and sees its purpose in attaching the child to the outward association of the church, in stimulating the memories, and inciting to moral virtues. Here appears his entire discussion of the matter, "De Paedobaptismo."

"Sequitur ut de baptismo infantum, doctorum gratia, aliquid addamus, qui, tametsi ne eius necessitas e mandato Christi Matth. 28, 19. Ioh. 3, 5. Marc. 10, 14. nec usus sat antiquus potest demon-strari, tamen tantum

and the evidence of the postapostolic church.⁴⁰ Both of these arguments have the quality of variableness in common. This has been shown quite clearly. It can be imagined that if these men would be shown reasons indicating that infant baptism would be not only useless, but downright detrimental to society, they would readily give up the practice and become its foremost antagonists. The line between the approach of the Anabaptists and the Rationalists and Supranaturalists is very thin indeed.

These theologians would probably not take it amiss if it could be pointed out to them that their arguments for infant baptism are in no way conclusive and are subject to variableness. After all, the age of Enlightenment prided itself on pushing away the supposed darkness of the previous ages. Certainly they would be willing to apply this to themselves.

Since the Rationalists and Supranaturalists worked with quantities

abest, ut prohibeatur, ut contra multa sint, quae eum iuste et utiliter con ferri parvulis persuadent: iuste quidem, cum in-fantes haud incapaces sint nec societatis populi Dei (fidei externae, nam internam non capiunt) in quam hoc ritu, ut olim Iudaei infantes circumcissione, adoptantur nec iuris beneficiorum Christi, cuius non ultima pars etiam conferri in infantes potest: utiliter autem, sive propter pueros, quibus memoria beneficii per omnem vitam solatia virtutisque incitamenta adferet, sive propter parentes, quos valde interest, consecrare suos Christo atque ad officia sua obeunda religione arctio contingi." Institutio Theologi Christiani (Editio Quinta; Norimberg und Altorf: n.p., 1791), pp. 719f.

⁴⁰The Rationalistic attitude in North American Lutheranism towards infant baptism found its ablest proponent in Frederick Quitman, president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of New York and a student of Johannes Semler, the father of the historical critical method and a leading German Lutheran theologian in the Enlightenment. Quitman puts forth his views on baptism in his Evangelical Catechism written for use in the New York Synod. Two Rationalistic traits are evident in his approach to infant baptism. (1) Much stress is laid on the moral and ethical advantages of the rite. (2) The evidence for infant baptism is purely of an historical nature. Nothing is mentioned of theological reasons, i.e., original sin and the need for regeneration. Here follow the pertinent

which are variable, their approach to infant baptism is completely foreign to that of the Lutheran Confessions and of The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod where all doctrines including that of infant baptism are conclusively drawn from the Holy Scripture without one question of doubt. The Scriptures alone are the pure clear fountain of Israel which is the only source of doctrine. Without them no doctrine, whether it be of traditional or practical origin, may be admitted in the church.

sections of the Evangelical Catechism.

"1 Q. What is a Sacrament? A. A Sacrament is a sacred rite, instituted by Christ himself, with a view to improve his followers in faith and holiness, and to confirm the promises of the gospel to those, that make proper use of it.

"10 Q. What does sacred history declare concerning this subject? A. Sacred history makes frequent mention of whole families having been baptized by the apostles and the history of the primitive Christian church exhibits some unquestionable traces that infant baptism prevailed in the church as early as the close of the second century.

"11 Q. What induces you to believe that the very apostles baptized infants? A. Because as converted Jews, they had the Mosaic institution concerning the circumcision of young children before them, and also the example of their Rabbies, who, according to their own accounts, baptized not only adult proselytes from paganism but also children.

"12 Q. Has infant baptism any moral tendency? A. Yes; parents that offer their children for baptism manifest a religious sense highly beneficial to their family and offspring, while children that are early made sensible of their allegiance to Christ will be induced to become acquainted with their Lord and benefactor." Evangelical Catechism (Hudson: William E. Norman, 1814), pp. 109ff.

Even though Quitman says that infant baptism is Scriptural, he does so on historical grounds and not theological. That infant baptism is Scriptural is shown only to be highly probable because of the apostolic association with the Rabbinic traditions and because of evidence found in the late second century. Both reasons are highly tenuous and though helpful cannot be absolutely conclusive. Even the matter of baptizing entire families is in no way absolutely conclusive. Infant baptism is Scriptural because of theological reasons and not historical ones. This argument Quitman has entirely avoided.

CHAPTER III

FRIEDRICH ERNST DANIEL SCHLEIERMACHER

Introduction

The early nineteenth century marked the end of the age of the Enlightenment in German Protestant theology. Theological Rationalism as a specific theological school was based upon the philosophical presuppositions of the eighteenth century. Rationalism as a specific theological force was to wane in significance.

Outstanding in his opposition to theological Rationalism was Friedrich Schleiermacher. He was contemporaneous with the last of the Rationalistic theologians. Where the Rationalists had made reason the criterion of their theology, Schleiermacher made the Christian feeling, das christliche Gefühl, or the divine consciousness, das Gottesbewusstsein, the center of his. For him the totality of Christian experience of which the Scriptures record only the first feelings became the source of knowledge for the church. He went so far as to say that the spirit of the church was the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was limited in His activity by what the church did. It was through the activity of the church that the Spirit brought members into the fellowship.¹ Within this connection Schleiermacher finds justification for the practice of infant baptism. Baptism is for infants a way by which they can come into a society where

¹Friedrich Schleiermacher, Der Christliche Glaube nach den Grundsätzen der evangelischen Kirche (Dritte unveränderte Ausgabe; Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1836), II, 280ff.

upon reaching maturity they can come to faith through the spoken word.

Already it is evident that Schleiermacher's presuppositions in regard to infant baptism were no different from those of the Rationalists and Supranaturalists as outlined in the previous chapter. Here are the six principles which he held in common with them. (1) The Scriptures know absolutely of no infant baptism. (2) In the New Testament only adults are baptized. (3) Faith can only be created by the spoken word and not by baptism. (4) Since children are not conscious, or self-conscious, they are not capable of faith which is being divinely conscious and presupposes self-consciousness. (5) Infant baptism is an incomplete baptism because it is done without faith. (6) This baptism remains incomplete until confirmation. Without confirmation infant baptism is contrary to the ordinances of Christ.

The similarity between Schleiermacher and the early nineteenth century Rationalism is not surprising when it is considered that the theology of both was based on the philosophical Idealism and the older theological Rationalism of the eighteenth century which was the age of the Enlightenment in Germany.² Schleiermacher as well as the theologians of the Enlightenment regarded the church as a place for moral improvement.³ Both had explained away the miraculous both in regard to the Scriptures and to faith.

However, unlike the Rationalists and Supranaturalists Schleiermacher

²Horst Stephan, Geschichte Der Deutschen Evangelischen Theologie Seit Dem Deutschen Idealismus, edited by Martin Schmidt (Zweite Neuarbeitete Auflage; Alfred Töpelmann: Berlin, 1960), p. 180.

³Heinz-Horst Schrey, "Walther, Christian: Typen des Reich Gottes Verständnisses. Studien zur Eschatologie und Ethik im 19. Jahrhundert," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXXVII (October, 1962), 774.

did not argue for the continuance of infant baptism from the same reasons as they had offered. He does not say that it can be done because Christ did not forbid it. Neither is there any mention of the practice of the ancient church as being decisive in this question. This does not mean that he is without historical orientation. He is quite aware of the fact church up to the Reformation had almost unanimously practiced infant baptism. But such historical arguments have no place in Schleiermacher's discussion.

Working with the same presuppositions as the Rationalists and Supernaturalists, he comes to the conclusion that infant baptism is a poorly administered baptism because it is administered with the knowledge that infants do not and cannot believe. Since it is a poorly administered baptism, it would be better to administer baptism upon the child's reaching maturity. However, it is a matter of Christian freedom when the head of the household should have his children baptized. He does not on this account disparage or count as invalid those baptisms administered in infancy. These are valid baptisms but not of the same caliber as those administered in faith. He suggests that the Anabaptists and the paedobaptists recognize the validity of the other's baptism. In so far as Schleiermacher in opposing infant baptism does not take the radical view of the Anabaptists, his attitude resembles that of the indifference of the Socinians. The resemblance between Schleiermacher and the Socinians also exists in the doctrine of God where both denied the traditional doctrine of the Trinity.⁴

⁴Schleiermacher, op. cit., pp. 540ff.

Schleiermacher's approach to infant baptism is more admirable than that of the Rationalists and Supranaturalists in that he recognized the logical conclusions of his theological presuppositions and suggested that perhaps infant baptism no longer had to be practiced. Such conclusions were not recognized by the Rationalists and Supranaturalists.

As in other doctrines Schleiermacher has an important place in the nineteenth century since his ideas became highly influential in German Protestant theology.

Baptism

For Schleiermacher baptism is an act of the will through which the church brings individuals into its fellowship. It is through the fellowship of the church that the promise of Christ is effective. On this account baptism is the means through which God is active in bringing individuals into living fellowship with Christ. Here in this fellowship, justification is worked. Baptism was established by Christ as an act of reception into the church. When a person is received into the church through baptism, it is actually an act of Christ, if it is performed in the manner commanded by Him and in accordance with His will. During Christ's life baptism was not necessary for entering into fellowship with Him. The act of reception was completed through the word of forgiveness spoken by Christ and through his call to enter to discipleship. The act of reception was completed by Christ Himself and baptism as an additional act of reception would have been superfluous. Now that Christ is not on earth, baptism has taken the place of His personal choice. What Christ once did, baptism now does.⁵

⁵Ibid., pp. 362ff.

To the act of baptism belongs the word about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It is on this word that the discipleship of Christ rests. This word has significance for the one baptizing as well as for the one being baptized. The word concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit expresses the intention of the church and the desire of the one seeking baptism. On this account this word is the word of both the church and the baptized. Essential to baptism is the fact that this word must be known and confessed by the one who is to be baptized. This is already apparent in the command to make disciples which can only happen through the power of the word. This word comes before the act of baptism. Such was also the case in the apostolic practice where only after the word was acknowledged and confessed baptism was applied. Without this confession baptism would have been unthinkable. Thus through the same word the church expresses its intention to the act of baptism and the baptized expresses his agreement with this intention. He also indicates that he has appropriated this word to himself. Since the confession of the baptized person to the word is necessary to the act of baptism, it follows that faith should be required of the one who is to receive baptism. With faith the act of baptism becomes what it intends to be. The requirement for faith in candidates for baptism is based on the words of Christ Matthew 28:19f. and Mark 16:16. The faith which is required of candidates for baptism is worked by preaching. This is taught by both Peter in his sermon on Pentecost and Paul in Romans 10:17. Baptism does not disrupt the function of the preaching of the word, but serves to confirm it.⁶

⁶Ibid., pp. 375ff.

When baptism is not received in faith, it is poorly received. It is not good to administer baptism without faith. A baptism without faith is not done according to what Christ requires. The church can never maintain an attitude of indifference so that it would apply baptism to unbelievers as well as to believers. Even though baptism might be applied without the benefit of faith, there is no necessity to repeat baptism after faith arises in such an individual. But as long as baptism remains without the accompanying faith, baptism has many imperfections. Such a baptism remains incomplete till faith is worked in the individual through preaching.⁷

Schleiermacher is against the concept of baptism working faith as was maintained by the Lutheran dogmaticians. Such a concept is said to be against the entire apostolic practice as well as the total experience of the church. The church is not to increase its membership by baptizing en masse. Where the church does happen to baptize an unbeliever, it does not rely on baptism to produce faith in such a person, but upon the preaching of the word. Should such an unbeliever come to faith after being baptized, the cause of his faith would be the preached word and not the baptism which was so poorly administered. Schleiermacher claims that the truth of this statement is apparent even to the simple Christian.⁸ As will be shown later, infant baptism falls into this category of an erroneously applied baptism. Infant baptism is applied without the necessary conditions of faith and confession. After the child reaches the age where

⁷Ibid., p. 378.

⁸Ibid.

he can mentally handle the preached word, he can come to faith. However, the cause of faith will be the word and not the previously poorly administered baptism.

In a certain sense it may be said that baptism works salvation. For Schleiermacher salvation is completed when the individual is received into the congregation. This reception into the congregation is brought about through baptism. Schleiermacher admits that against such a concept of salvation being attainable in the congregation, it may be said that salvation does exist before baptism in so far as faith is required before baptism. However, he goes on to explain that there does exist a certain enjoyment of salvation which is only present in the congregation of believers. With the development of faith, there is a desire to enter into the fellowship of believers. Now in so far as baptism takes the believer into the fellowship of believers, it may be said to work salvation and may be called the sealing with divine grace. So baptism is to be considered the means of the justifying activity of God in so far as it takes the individual into that fellowship where he can take possession of the forgiveness of sins and of the right of being adopted by God. The forgiveness of sins is limited in a certain sense by the efficacy of the common life of the congregation. So also the Christian's adoption by God is connected with the rights of the congregation of saints.⁹

If faith should be present before baptism, then the fruits which are ascribed to baptism already exist before baptism. In this case baptism works nothing, but only certifies that which has already been done. This is said to be the position of some of the confessional symbols of

⁹ Ibid., pp. 378f.

the Protestant church. Undoubtedly, this is a reference to the Reformed confessions where baptism only has a sealing function. Such a position is said not to make baptism ineffectual. On the other hand where faith is not present before baptism, it is not present after baptism. In this case baptism is the beginning of a series of acts which the church directs to the baptized. Every connection between the spiritual life of the baptized and Christ's perfection and salvation begins with baptism. Even in the case of a regenerate unbaptized person, there is no real participation in Christ's perfection and salvation. Such an unbaptized person has no part in Christ's activity which he has established in the congregation or in that salvation which he established in the common consciousness. This is especially true where an unbaptized believer stays out of the Christian fellowship and less true when such a person remains unbaptized because of the neglect of the church. By maintaining that baptism is the beginning of those acts which lead to salvation of an unregenerate person and is an act necessary for believers if they want to participate fully in the salvation of Christ, Schleiermacher believes that he has satisfied those Protestant confessions which ascribe to baptism faith and faith's effects, without teaching that baptism has any magical force.¹⁰ Undoubtedly, those Protestant confessions to which he refers are the Lutheran Confessions, since they teach that baptism can work faith.

It is good to summarize Schleiermacher's position on baptism before going on to his specific discussion on infant baptism. Baptism is an act of the will of the baptized person as well as the act of the congregation who receives him into its fellowship. Involved in baptism is the word

¹⁰Ibid., pp. 379f.

about the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This word is the expression of what the congregation intends to do in baptism as well as the assent of the baptized to this intention. The assent of the baptized involves confession and faith. Where these are not present, baptism is poorly administered and remains incomplete till faith is worked by preaching. Under no circumstances can baptism be said to work faith. By saying that baptism works nothing in the individual Schleiermacher attempts to satisfy the Reformed confessions. On the other hand he attempts to satisfy the Lutheran Confessions by saying that baptism does work salvation in so far that when it is applied to an unbeliever it is the first of many acts of the church through which faith will arise in the individual. For a believer it brings him to the enjoyment of salvation. In reality Schleiermacher has given two meanings to the concept of salvation. In one sense it is the salvation wrought by faith, and in the other sense it is the fuller enjoyment of salvation which is found in the Christian congregation. In Schleiermacher's understanding of baptism, infant baptism is to be understood as a baptism applied to an unbeliever which is to be the first of many acts which the church directs to him.

Infant Baptism

For Schleiermacher infant baptism is only a complete baptism when it is supplemented by an act of confession which is based on instruction. Without this confession infant baptism is an incomplete baptism.¹¹

¹¹ Ibid., p. 382. "Die Kindertaufe ist nur eine vollständige Taufe, wenn man das nach vollendetem Unterricht hinzukommende Glaubensbekenntnis als den letzten dazu noch gehörigen Act ansieht."

There are no traces concerning infant baptism in the New Testament. All supposed references to infant baptism in the New Testament must be brought in from the outside. Infant baptism is not in harmony with the apostolic practice of baptizing which required that the candidate for baptism at least have a minimal amount of faith and that he be penitent. Infant baptism is to be considered a deviation from the original practice. It is difficult to explain this deviation and to know under what circumstances it arose, since there is a definite lack of evidence concerning it. Schleiermacher offers what he considers the reasons for the coming into existence of infant baptism. There is no one reason for the rise of infant baptism. Rather there are many reasons which taken together could call upon Christian feeling, das christliche Gefühl, to support infant baptism. The first reason offered was the desire of Christians to count their children among those who died in the Lord, in case they should die before they were old enough to receive Christian instruction. Secondly, infant baptism served to obligate the members of the Christian congregation over against the children born of Christian parents. The congregation would assume the parental duties over against the child if the parents did not perform them. Finally, through baptism the children of Christians were separated from the children of Jews and heathens. These are three foremost motives for the origins of infant baptism. After infant baptism had been established as custom in the church, it was used to express the confidence of Christian parents that their children did not lack the working of the Holy Spirit.¹²

Schleiermacher then goes on to discuss other reasons offered for

¹²Ibid., pp. 383f.

infant baptism which he disqualifies as invalid. He is critical of the Protestant confessions which are said to treat infant baptism quite apart from anything that might be historical. These confessions are said to attempt to justify the custom of infant baptism in itself. But these attempts are said to be insufficient and the reasons offered contradicted one another. It is judged by Schleiermacher as false reasoning to baptize children because they are God's possession. If children are God's possession, they do not need baptism as a means of being offered to God and of receiving God's grace. On the other hand, if they need baptism, the reason for giving them baptism cannot be that they are God's possession. Further proofs for baptism can be neither that God wanted to include the posterity of Christians in the church nor that Christ poured out His blood for them, then we should have to baptize all upon whom we could lay hands, because Christ poured out His blood for all men.¹³

Schleiermacher then goes on to discuss the insufficiency of infant baptism. In the first place, infant baptism is an incomplete baptism, because its recipients, namely children, do not have the requirements for receiving baptism. The requirements which they lack are penitence and faith. Since the operation of baptism is necessarily limited by the requirements of penitence and faith, baptism effects no change in the person of the child. The child is the same after his baptism as before his baptism. He can be said to be neither unholy before his baptism nor holy after his baptism. Just as the child before his baptism is not consciously repentant, so after his baptism he has no awareness of his adoption by God.

¹³ Ibid., p. 384.

There is no evidence that baptism works faith in children.¹⁴

Nevertheless, baptism is not without any result for children. Because of certain results it may be applied to them. Baptism is dispensed to them in connection with their future faith and confession. Infant baptism brings the child into the outer circle of the church where he may come into contact with the word. From this word which is found within the church faith will be able to arise in the child. It is on account of children's future faith that baptism is dispensed to them. By offering such a reason for the baptizing of children, Schleiermacher believes that he has avoided the pitfalls of those two reasons that he has previously criticized. These two reasons were that children already are in the church and they should be recommended to the grace of God. Baptism is also dispensed to children of Christian parents because through their natural connection with the Christian order in which God has placed them, they are already commended to the grace of God. It is on account of this natural order that they should be brought into the church through baptism. Both reasons for baptizing infants, their being brought into contact with the word and their natural connection with the Christian order through their parents, reach their consummating point in the child's making his own confession. The baptized child must make his own confession of faith and adhere to it.¹⁵

Even though infant baptism was said previously to be a poorly

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 385.

¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 385f. Schleiermacher is speaking of the connection children have with the church. One of the more interesting attempts to explain this relationship was offered by Isaak August Dorner, who was greatly influenced by Schleiermacher. Dorner tries to explain how unbelieving children can belong to a church which consists of believers. This is indeed an honest question and perhaps should have been considered

administered baptism, it is nevertheless a valid baptism. It is a valid baptism, but an incomplete one. It joins individuals to the kingdom of God, but it does not give them the possession and enjoyment of salvation. Schleiermacher's secular concept of the kingdom is evident in such a distinction. Through baptism children become objects only of the preparatory work of the Holy Spirit. It cannot be put on the same level as the baptism instituted by Christ which included confession. Still the incompleteness of infant baptism does not make it invalid, as if it were a perverted baptism. The Anabaptists are wrong in requiring that baptism be reapplied to those who have already received it. Should infant baptism be invalid on account of its incompleteness, then every baptism would be invalid for the same reason. There is always some lack of holiness in Christians, and there is no surer sign that real regeneration has occurred than the continued progress in Christian holiness. Schleiermacher on the

by all those who denied infant faith and still attributed church membership to baptized children. The answer given by Dorner is that it is not given to the church to distinguish the believers from the unbelievers. The parable of the tares growing among the wheat is mentioned to support the contention that unbelieving children should be retained in church membership. Here follows the pertinent section. "Wird für die Spättaufe der dogmatische Begriff der Kirche als der *Societas fidei et spiritus sancti* geltend gemacht und daraus gefolgert, die Kirche dürfe nur aus Wiedergeborenen bestehen, zu denen Unmündige nicht gehören, so ist dagegen zu erinnern, dass der Kirche die untrügliche Sicherheit versagt ist, zu wissen, wer wahrhaft gläubig und wiedergeboren ist. Daher kann auch nicht ihre Aufgabe sein, die Mitgliedschaft in der Kirche so zu bemessen, dass Jeder von ihr ausgeschlossen sei, der noch nicht wiedergeboren ist. Vielmehr ist ihr ja sogar gesagt: 'Lasset beides mit einander wachsen bis zur Ernte.'" (Berlin: Verlag von Wilhelm Hertz, 1880), I, 1, 840f.

It almost seems unnecessary to point out the logical error here. The parable has to do with those concerning whom we are not sure whether or not faith exists. It certainly does not mean that the church should without any discretion take all into membership or not practice excommunication. According to Dorner's own understanding inarticulate children are without faith. This is not a case of doubt, but of absolute certainty. Hence if children are without faith, they are not members of the church consisting only of believers.

same account condemns the practice of the ancient church in baptizing persons only shortly before they died. The reason for withholding baptism till then was that the individuals were still lacking in Christian holiness. But Schleiermacher claims that the lack of holiness in an individual does invalidate his baptism. This is also true in the case of infant baptism. It is a baptism that is erroneously applied because there is no faith in the child receiving it, but still it is a valid baptism. When baptism is applied to children, the efficacy which is peculiar to it remains suspended till the time when the baptized acquires his own faith.¹⁶

In order to correct the incompleteness of infant baptism, Schleiermacher proposes that confirmation should of necessity follow it. Only when infant baptism is supplemented by confirmation, which is to be understood as the making of one's own confession, does infant baptism come into harmony with the original ordinance of Christ. When the church dispenses baptism to infants, it obligates itself to make sure that this sacrament receives a true and proper completion in Christian instruction. It is wrong to take confirmation out of its connection with infant baptism and to make it a sacrament in itself. Where confirmation becomes a sacrament in itself, the baptism applied in infancy remains incomplete and ineffective.¹⁷

Schleiermacher says without any hesitation that in the present situation, it would be all right to give up the practice of baptizing infants. It first came into existence at that time when there began to be many children born of Christian parents who were to be educated in the church. The

¹⁶ Op. cit., p. 386.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 387.

educating of so many children was a new situation for the church which it had not previously experienced. At this time baptism was chosen as the symbolical act to express the fact that children belonged to the congregation as well as to the parents. Now however, it would be perfectly in order to let infant baptism fall into disuse as long as the custom would not be called invalid. Infant baptism could be omitted without causing any detriment to the children. Only if magical powers are attributed to baptism would there be any advantage to giving baptism to children. The advantage would consist in that the baptized would have certain claims in the life of the world to come. Such a magical opinion of baptism disregards the effects of baptism in this life. Should no magical powers be ascribed to baptism, then there is no difference between those children who have been baptized, but who have not renewed their baptismal covenant before they die, and children who die without ever being baptized. This of course is the position of Schleiermacher. If magical powers are not attributed to baptism, then every household has the liberty to determine whether their children should be baptized in the usual manner or whether they should wait till the time when they can make their own confession. By delaying the baptism of our children till the time when they can make their own confession, we would thereby be expressing our willingness to remove our verdict of condemnation from the Anabaptists and to enter into churchly fellowship with them. All that would be necessary would be for them to say that infant baptism is a valid baptism if it is taken in connection with the supplementary confession, as would be supplied in confirmation.¹⁸

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 387f.

Conclusion

To summarize Schleiermacher's position on infant baptism a few essential points should be recalled. Infant baptism is not the Biblical baptism. It is to be considered an erroneously applied baptism since faith and repentance are lacking on the part of the child. Schleiermacher sees the origins of infant baptism springing from the feelings of the Christians. The Christians wanted to count their children who did not receive instruction among those who were saved in case they should die. They wanted to obligate the congregation to the children whose parents might not seriously fulfill their duties to them. They desired to separate their children from those of unbelievers. He dismisses reasons previously used to support infant baptism such as that they are already God's possession and that they need baptism. The two valid reasons according to Schleiermacher for baptizing them are that through baptism they are brought into contact with the word and that through their birth within Christendom they are commended to the grace of God. Nevertheless it is still an erroneously applied baptism and may be given up. Every household has the liberty of deciding whether baptism should be given to its children. Its lack would not affect the salvation of the children. In fact we should be ready to go into fellowship with the Anabaptists and we should recognize the baptisms of one another as equally valid. Still for Schleiermacher the baptism of the Anabaptists is superior to that of the paedobaptists, since adult baptism has the element of faith, a factor said not to be present in infant baptism.

For Schleiermacher baptism and with it infant baptism are no longer means of grace in the strictest sense of the term. He calls this sacrament

a ladder (Leiter) by which one can join the Christian fellowship.¹⁹

Within this fellowship salvation can be obtained. Actually for Schleiermacher association with the earthly fellowship of the church represents the furthest bounds of salvation. The fellowship on earth is the extent of the kingdom of God. Outside of this earthly fellowship there is no salvation. As with other theologians influenced by the philosophy of the age of Enlightenment, the kingdom of God became a purely earthly entity without any heavenly dimensions. Christ and the Holy Spirit not only worked through the church or Christian fellowship but were actually limited by it. Apart from the church there was no separate supernatural majestic existence of Christ and the Spirit.²⁰

Salvation was something for this world and not for the next. Faith was no longer thought of by Schleiermacher as consisting of a sincere trust in the saving merits of Christ, but it became a disposition of the mind to walk in the footsteps of Christ. The church was not the association of the faithful around the word and sacraments, but it was the association of those who were endeavoring to attain moral betterment.

In so far as the moral factor became the decisive element in the understanding of the church, it is easy to see why baptism would no longer be called a means of grace. Grace or salvation was moral endeavor and not a spiritual heavenly entity. This type of moral salvation could not be given through the mere application of water and the recitation of words. This moral salvation demanded participation in the fellowship.

¹⁹Cf. F. Kattenbusch, "Taufe. II. Kirchenlehre," Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, edited by Albert Hauck (Dritte verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1907), XIX, 422.

²⁰Schleiermacher, op. cit., pp. 293ff. and 299ff.

Schleiermacher's honesty must be admired in that he readily suggests that infant baptism could be dropped without any detriment to the child's salvation. Since there is no salvation outside of this life and since this salvation cannot be attached to a rite, there is no real purpose for the child being baptized. The children can participate in Christian fellowship even though they are not baptized.

For Schleiermacher the discontinuance of infant baptism is purely an historical question. The evidence of the New Testament is against it. But since it is only an historical question without any decisive theological significance, he is willing to tolerate either infant baptism or the delaying of baptism till maturity. This is not a burning issue for him. Even apart from baptism the child can engage in moral betterment. On this point Schleiermacher is logical in respect to his presuppositions that infant baptism is not even suggested by the New Testament and that it is not really a means by which salvation is conveyed directly to the child.

Baptism for Schleiermacher is only a step in the moral improvement of the Christian. Within this scheme he finds justification for infant baptism. Since children will participate in this process, which is really salvation, infant baptism may be said to work salvation. Of course what is meant here is that infant baptism initiates the child into that association where this process will be fostered. As he himself says the baptized child has no advantage in respect to salvation that the unbaptized child does not have. This is not difficult to understand when Schleiermacher's concept of salvation is taken into consideration.

Confirmation is given a place by Schleiermacher which is equal to or higher than that of baptism. Infant baptism is not in accordance with the ordinance of Christ unless confirmation also be administered to the

child. This thought is more positively stated by Schleiermacher than by either the Rationalists or Supranaturalists. Without confirmation, according to Schleiermacher, we would be going against the ordinances of Christ. It is also amazing that Schleiermacher says that when confirmation is made into a sacrament, infant baptism remains as incomplete as if there had been no confirmation. According to Schleiermacher's own way of thinking, it seems unusual that simply because confirmation was called something else, it would no longer fulfill its assigned purpose of completing infant baptism.

Let it be said that for Schleiermacher baptism and the church have lost all heavenly dimensions. Baptism becomes subservient to the concept of the church which is not only the bearer of salvation, but the actual salvation itself. The spoken word has a much higher function in this scheme, since it can incite to moral perfection. Baptism does not have such continuing significance or power in the remainder of the Christian's life. It is only one act among many. It does not contain the word in itself, but it is just a rite accompanying one particular proclamation of the preached word.

In the introduction to this chapter six points of agreement between Schleiermacher and the Rationalists and Supranaturalists were listed. There are two items where there is some difference. (1) Schleiermacher never speaks about emotional impetus coming from watching the rite of infant baptism. Nothing is said about the advantages for the observers. (2) He calls it an erroneously applied baptism. Such an honest and forthright admission of what seems evident from their own presuppositions was not made by the Rationalists and Supranaturalists.

A concise summation of the doctrine of baptism for all these theologians mentioned is that baptism is not a sacrament bringing heavenly

salvation to either adult or child, but it is the introduction into that association which bears the name of Christian. They all identified the kingdom of God as being this earthly association. This was all of salvation.

Introduction

The middle of the nineteenth century experienced a new interest in the old Lutheran theology. This was a reaction to the age of the Enlightenment which had produced Rationalism. These theologians who attempted to restore the older Lutheran theology were not unanimous concerning in what degree this theology should be restored. The most conservative form of this restoration was called the "Theology of Reformation" and the liberal form was known as the "Trinitarian Theology."¹

Walter Willrich Heggenberg and Friedrich Adolf Philipp were the prominent representatives of the Theology of Reformation.² This theology continues to have influence through The Lutheran Church-Missions Synod which was established as a direct result of it.³ It was

¹[Weig] H. S. [p. 112], "Lutheran Theology after 1550," *Lutheran Encyclopedia*, edited by Erwin L. Lutzer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 697f.

²Walter Willrich Heggenberg, *Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Theologie seit dem dreizehnten Jahrhundert*, edited by Martin Schmidt (Leipzig: Neumann-Neubauer, 1900), pp. 107ff. Hereafter Schmidt's edition is cited as Schmidt-Schmidt.

³The truth of this fact is more recognized in Germany than in any other country. The following statement is found in Schmidt-Schmidt: "Für die Lutheraner, die sich durch Auswanderung aus Nordamerika dem deutschen Christentum anschloßen (Missionsarbeit), reichten völlig fruchtlos die lutherischen Theologen. Die jüngere evangelische Kirche (Mission) von J. H. Valdemar Luthersburg (St. Louis 1850-1870), schloßen sich nicht an die deutschen vor seinem Prädikantentum. Folgerichtig verwarfen sie das ganze neue deutsche Lutherthum als Abfall von reinem Glauben. Daher nahmen sie auch die theologische rabie des 17. Jahrhunderts und erstellten eine neue Theologie." *Ibid.*, p. 170.

CHAPTER IV

ERLANGEN THEOLOGY

Introduction

The middle of the nineteenth century experienced a new interest in the old Lutheran theology. This was a reaction to the age of the Enlightenment which had produced Rationalism. Those theologians who endeavored to restore the older Lutheran theology were not unanimous concerning to what degree this theology should be restored. The more conservative form of this restoration was called the "Theology of Repristination" and the liberal form was known as the "Erlangen Theology."¹

Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg and Friedrich Adolf Philippi were the prominent representatives of the Theology of Repristination.² This theology continues to have influence through The Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod which was established as a direct result of it.³ It was

¹L[ewis] W. S [pitz], "Lutheran Theology after 1580," Lutheran Cyclopedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), pp. 639f.

²Horst Stephan, Geschichte der deutschen evangelischen Theologie seit dem deutschen Idealismus, edited by Martin Schmidt (Zweite neubearbeitete Auflage; Berlin, Alfred Töpelmann: 1960), pp. 167ff. Hereafter Schmidt's edition is cited as Stephan-Schmidt.

³The truth of this fact is even recognized in Germany till this very day. The following statement is found in Stephan-Schmidt. "Nur die Lutheraner, die sich durch Auswanderung nach Nordamerika dem deutschen Geistesleben entzogen (Missourisynode), machten vollen Ernst mit der Lutherischen Orthodoxie. Sie gingen sogar auf Luther zurück (Neudruck von J. G. Walchs Lutherausgabe St. Louis 1880-1904), scheuten sich auch nicht wie die deutschen vor seinem Prädestinarianismus. Folgerecht verwarfen sie das ganze neue deutsche Luthertum als Abfall vom rechten Glauben. Leider nahmen sie auch die theologische rabies des 17. Jahrh. auf und entfalten eine neue Streittheologie." Ibid., p. 170.

called the "Theology of Repristination" because it was and endeavored to be only a revival of the Lutheran theology of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In the matter of infant baptism it was taught that baptism was the word of God in water applied to children in order to create faith in them. Through this faith children are saved and delivered from sin, death, and Satan.⁴

The Erlangen Theology differed from the Theology of Repristination in that it was more than just a simple restoration of the older Lutheranism. It attempted to form a synthesis between confessional Lutheranism and the new learning of the age of Enlightenment.⁵ This synthesis is also evident in the doctrine of infant baptism.

Characteristic of the theologians belonging to this school was a particular and unique anthropology. Man consisted of two parts. The first part was called the nature of a man and existed in the state of unconsciousness. The second part was his reason which was conscious. Of these two parts the nature is the more basic, since it exists in all from the moment of their conception. From this natural part develops the reason, which is the seat of the thinking process. Reason is a product of man's nature.

⁴Friedr [ich] Ad [olf] Philippi, Die kirchliche Glaubenslehre (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1871), V. 2, pp. 90f.

⁵Spitz, loc. cit., and Stephan-Schmidt, op. cit., p. 181. Cf. also H. Grasz, "Erlanger Schule," Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart, edited by Kurtalling (Dritte, völlig neu bearbeitete Auflage; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1958), II, 566ff. Hereafter this edition is cited as the RGG.

Corresponding to this anthropology, which considered reason as an offspring of man's nature, were baptism and the spoken word. Baptism was the means of grace directed to the nature and the spoken word was directed to the reason. Just as the nature was the essential part of a human being, so baptism and not the preached word was the essential and real imparting of grace. Since the child was an undeveloped person, he consisted only of nature. He was devoid of all reason. Because the child had no mind, he was an excellent object of the sacrament of baptism which worked in the nature apart from the mind. Through baptism Christ and the Spirit would come directly to the child's nature and dwell in it. This sacramental effect operated directly on the body and did not work through the soul. Faith played no part. Only after the child had attained the use of his reason would it be possible for him to handle the spoken word and thus come to faith.

Various terms may be employed to designate this particular understanding of baptism. It could be called "theosophical." This indicates some type of direct relationship with God apart from the word. "Mystical" expresses a similar thought. "Magical" would be fitting since baptism worked salvation without the benefit of faith. To call it an "opus operatum" would signify the same. Even though these terms adequately and fairly describe this particular concept of infant baptism, they are prejudicial because of their other uses. For the sake of convenience the term "naturalistic" will be used. "Naturalistic" expresses the idea that baptism works on the nature of a human being. Though the word "naturalistic" has other meanings in the English language, it shall be used here only in the way it has been defined. As it is used here it also suggests the naturalistic philosophy of Romanticism which had great influence

among Erlangen theologians in regard to their concept of the sacrament.⁶

Three distinct influences can be identified in the "naturalistic" concept of infant baptism as held by the Erlangen theologians. First there was the influence of the older Lutheran theology which regarded baptism as a direct means of salvation for children. This influence was indeed an improvement over the Rationalists and Schleiermacher who denied the saving efficacy of baptism. Secondly the influence of the natural philosophy of Romanticism was responsible for their anthropology of the Erlangen theologians which elevated the nature of man over his rational part.

Of particular importance in the natural philosophy of Romanticism was Friedrich Schelling. Johann Fichte had so emphasized the Ego that nature was made subordinate to it. Such a concept was characteristic of the age of the Enlightenment where the mind and its powers were so highly exalted. Schelling reversed this scheme. For him nature was a form of the absolute Ego. Nature was described as the visible mind and mind as the invisible nature. The highest end of nature is man. In man nature becomes objective to itself. This philosophy is reflected in the anthropology of the Erlangen theologians.⁷ For them the nature is the basic part of the man. As the human being develops, the nature can reflect on itself. This reflection is the mind. As previously mentioned baptism

⁶Stephan-Schmidt, op. cit., pp. 174f.

⁷Ibid., and Karl Ludwig Wilhelm Heyder, "Schelling, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von," A Religious Encyclopaedia, edited by Philip Schaff (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Publishers, 1883), III, 2118ff.

comes to the entire nature with salvation and the spoken word comes to the mind.

Though the Erlangen Theology was part of the general reaction against Rationalism, Rationalism was the third influence in this theology.⁸ The influence of Rationalism is clearly discernible in the concept of baptism. There were four concepts common to both Rationalism and the Erlangen School. First of all, it was agreed that faith could only be worked through the spoken word and not through baptism. Secondly, consciousness is a necessary prerequisite for faith. Since children do not have this consciousness, they cannot have faith. Thirdly, because of the children's lack of faith, due both to the inability of baptism to create such faith and to their own unconsciousness, their baptism is incomplete. Fourthly, this incompleteness is corrected when the child is sufficiently mature to obtain faith through the preached word. Like the Rationalists and Schleiermacher the Erlangen theologians said that baptism could only be dispensed to children under the condition that the child would later hear the word.

The concept of the "naturalistic" operation of baptism was not uncommon from about the middle of the nineteenth century. To be discussed first is Johannes Hbiling, a professor at the University of Erlangen, who on the basis of Matthew 28:19 shows the priority of baptism over the spoken word. Hans Lassen Martensen, a professor at the University of Copenhagen and later bishop of Seeland, gives an adequate presentation

⁸The Erlangen theologians consciously adopted Rationalistic principles into their theology. Cf. Spitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 639f., and Grassz, *op. cit.*, pp. 556ff.

of the particular anthropology here involved. Martensen is generally classified with the Mediating theologians. However, in the matter of the sacraments he is best grouped with the Erlangen theologians.⁹

Gustav Thomasius, professor at Erlangen and well-known proponent of the kenosis theory¹⁰ which was related to the concept of infant baptism, gives a comprehensive systematic presentation of the "naturalistic" working of baptism. Appended at the end of the chapter is a discussion of particular concepts related to the "naturalistic" concept of baptism. Included here are discussions on infant baptism as taught by Carl Gustav Gerhard von Zezschwitz of Erlangen; Ernst Hory, a Lutheran pastor, who clearly showed the connection between the kenosis theory of the incarnation and the "naturalistic" concept of infant baptism; Franz Delitzsch of Erlangen, who in his early years was associated with the founders of the Missouri Synod; and Rudolph Rocholl, a Lutheran pastor, who because of confessional reasons left the Union church for the hannoverische lutherische Landeskirche and thereafter joined the Altlutheraner.¹¹

Johann Wilhelm Friedrich Hüfling

Hüfling published his Das Sakrament der Taufe in two volumes in 1846 and 1848 respectively. For the most part Hüfling is interested in

⁹Stephan-Schmidt includes Martensen under the section entitled "Die Vermittlungstheologie," op. cit., p. 195. However, the following reservation is therewith included. "Freilich übernahm er Martensen dabei auch die Schwächen der deutschen Restaurationstheologie, z. b. die Kenotik und die neulutherische Sakramentslehre."

¹⁰Franz Pieper, Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), II, 117.

¹¹F. Hübner, "Rocholl, Rudolf," RGK (1961), V, 1131.

tracing the historical references to the practice of baptism in the writings of the ancient church. These two volumes contain a wealth of material on the early history of baptism and they are often quoted as authoritative in this matter. Höfling's work was concerned not only with historical questions, but also with dogmatical and exegetical ones. These last two concerns shall be the basis for our study of Höfling's concept of infant baptism.

Baptism

Prominent in Höfling's understanding of baptism is the clear and sharp division between baptism and the preached word. Each has an independent efficacy; but nevertheless they are dependent on each other in bringing the complete salvation to man. This understanding of baptism and the preached word is established primarily on the exegesis of Matthew 28:19f. This passage is interpreted to mean that both baptism and preaching are necessary to convey the complete salvation to man. Infant baptism fits into the scheme of this passage, since children receive baptism first and the preached word secondly. Only after they have received both, do they have the possession of salvation by faith.

Important in Höfling's understanding of baptism is its relationship to the preached word. For Höfling both baptism and the preached word are means through which God accomplishes his entire salvation in the individual. Baptism and the preached word work in such a way that the efficacy of the one is dependent upon the efficacy of the other. Each has an efficacy which is peculiar to its own nature and which makes it distinct from the efficacy of the other. The peculiar and distinct efficacy of one is complemented by the equally peculiar and distinct efficacy of the other. Both the preached word and baptism work to the same goal of

bringing complete salvation to the individual; but each works in a way which is qualitatively different from the other. Since the working of each is qualitatively different neither the preached word nor baptism can be omitted if complete salvation is to be effected. Should either the preached word or baptism be omitted, the intensified or repeated use of the one which has been applied cannot compensate for the one which has been omitted. The relationship between baptism and the word is to be understood as a qualitative one and not a quantitative one. This means that baptism and the preached word do not give the same gifts. After a person has received one of these, he will not receive the blessings of the first in the application of the second. The preached word and baptism each works its own blessings which are different from the other.¹²

Even though baptism and the preached word have qualitatively different effects, both of them work towards the same goal of imparting the Holy Spirit. This is seen in the Scriptures where what is attributed to the one place is attributed to the other in another place. Since both baptism and the preached word work toward the one and the same goal of imparting the Holy Spirit, the church can begin with either of them in its task of bringing complete salvation to the individual. The circumstances determine for the church whether it shall first dispense the preached word or baptism. In turn these circumstances are regulated by the personal disposition and receptivity of the individual. The church does not act arbitrarily or indiscriminately when it begins with either baptism or the preached word, since the same Holy Spirit is effective in each through distinctively different ways and since the application of the

¹² Joh [ann] Wilhelm Friedrich Höfling, Das Sacrament der Taufe (2 vols.; Erlangen: Palm, 1846), I, 16.

one is done in view of and in hope of being followed and completed by the application of the other.¹³ Höffling objects to the use of the traditional terms verbum audible and verbum visibile in expressing the distinction between the preached word and baptism, if baptism by this designation is to be understood only as a declarative and symbolical act ordered by God, which applies the word's promise of grace to the individual. This promise must be accepted in faith. Baptism is more than merely symbolizing, declaring, and offering salvation to the individual. Rather baptism as the institution and promise of God has a continuous effect on those who have received it. From the moment of its application baptism had a perpetual action. Baptism is the New Testament means of grace for effecting the saving fellowship with God through Christ. The difference between speaking and working. Through the preached word God speaks to man through words and facts. Through baptism God actively works on the very person of the man. In baptism God acts on the man and seals His action. The preached word informs man of salvation and offers it to him, but it is baptism that conveys this salvation to the individual. The grace and salvation which is given man in baptism is that power which can effect fellowship with God in Jesus Christ.¹⁴

Another difference between the two means of grace is that the word is directed only to the spirit of man, while baptism is directed to the entire

¹³Ibid., pp. 16f.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 18f.

individual. God's word has only a spiritual efficacy which works on the spirit of man. The efficacy of the preached word is not completely satisfactory in bringing about regeneration, because it is concentrated more in one point and less in another. To bring about regeneration the preached word must be applied in its various points, because no single word of God is able to effect regeneration. Baptism, however, is a better means for bringing about regeneration than is the preached word. According to its institution baptism employs an earthly material in its application. This indicates that baptism is a very concentrated and direct working of God on the basic spiritual and corporal nature of the individual, (geistige und leibliche Natur), and not only on his spirit and spiritual personality.¹⁵ Even though Höfling has not included any specific discussion on anthropology, his division of the effects of the preached word and baptism indicates a specific anthropology which divides the individual into two parts. The one part of man is called the mental personality, (geistige Persönlichkeit), upon which the preached word effects a knowledge of salvation. The other part of man is the mental corporal nature, (geistige und leibliche Natur). Baptism works directly on both parts of man. Since Höfling maintained that God works directly on the nature of man through baptism and not only on the spiritual part of man through the preached word, it may be said that he teaches that baptism has a "naturalistic" effect. Even though his anthropology is not clearly spelled out, it is nevertheless basic for understanding Höfling's concept of baptism and especially infant baptism.

It has been determined that baptism has its efficacy in the spiritual and natural parts of man. The task is now to state the effects of baptism.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 19.

Through this sacrament the individual is sunk into the grace-filled fellowship of the Lord's death and resurrection. The power, fruits, and blessings of these redeeming acts are appropriated to us in baptism.¹⁶ There is even an efficacy connected with the symbolical character of baptism. Baptism cannot be considered merely a religious washing which then symbolizes to the person receiving it the necessity of being inwardly purified and cleansed. If it were only this, baptism would not be a distinctive-ly Christian institution.¹⁷

The efficacy connected with the symbolical character of baptism is that baptism works what it symbolizes and demands. It cannot be said that the symbolical nature of baptism is destroyed; rather it is raised to a higher level. Baptism is not a symbol which creates a tension between what should be and what really obtains, but it is a symbol which effects what is contained in the symbol.¹⁸

Infant Baptism

Unlike Wegscheider, Reinhard, and Schleiermacher Hüfling does recognize a Biblical basis for infant baptism. He does not, however, base infant baptism on any specific example of its being practiced in the New Testament. The account in the New Testament of the baptizing of entire families are considered as inconclusive evidence in the matter, since it can never be

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 20f.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

proved with certainty whether inarticulate children were present on these occasions. However, the opposite, that they were not present and baptized on these occasions also cannot be proved from either the Scriptures themselves or the so-called apostolic and ancient fathers of the early church.¹⁹

Höfling derives the basis for infant baptism from the accumulation of certain passages. The passages used are: the command of Christ in Matthew 28:19f.; Peter's sermon on Pentecost, Acts 2:39; the pericopes of the blessings of the children as found in the Synoptic Gospels; the comparison of baptism to circumcision in Colossians 2:11f.; and the special status of children born of Christians, 1 Corinthians 7:14.

In Matthew 28:19f., children are included in "all nations" and they are therefore to be made disciples. They are objects of the Lord's command. Since teaching is not accessible to the children's level of development, baptism is the only means through which they can be made disciples. Children are capable of receiving baptism. The Holy Spirit speaking through the mouth of Peter in Acts 2:39 includes children in the promise. In the pericopes of the blessings of the children, the Lord scolded those who wanted to prevent the parents from bringing their children to Him, so that He might lay His hands on them and bless them. If we prevent children from being baptized, we are closing the only door through which they can enter into communion with Christ. From Colossians 2:11f. it is concluded that the sacrament of baptism has taken the place of the Old Testament institution of circumcision. If in the Old Testament the circumcision of the flesh was not only permitted but even commanded, for those in infancy, then the

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 99ff.

"circumcision of Christ" should not be denied to them.²⁰ The last passage which is considered is 1 Corinthians 7:14, which states that the children of Christian parents are holy. The children of Jews and heathen stand outside of the area of the calling grace of God, because their family connections are with unbelievers. On the other hand, the children of Christian parents already stand within the sphere and area of the calling grace of God. It is on this account that Paul calls the children of unbelievers unclean and the children of the believers clean. The natural connection that children of Christians have with Christian fellowship and with the calling grace of God not only makes them holy in antithesis to the children of unbelievers, but also imparts to them a special capacity for grasping, developing, and maintaining the grace of baptism. It can be said that through their birth they have a special right to receive this grace.²¹

Höfling establishes infant baptism not only on certain scriptural passages, but also on certain systematic grounds. The systematic bases of infant baptism are the children's need for baptismal grace and their ability to receive such grace. Since children have the need and receptivity for baptismal grace, it is concluded that they should receive it.

The need of children consists in that they have original sin, even though Höfling does not use the term. A number of passages from the Scriptures are cited to demonstrate that even the youngest children stand in need of baptismal grace because of their sin. Genesis 8:21 says that

²⁰Ibid., pp. 102f.

²¹Ibid., p. 104.

the imagination of a man's heart is evil from the time of his youth. In Psalm 51:7 David says that he was conceived by his mother in sin. Paul designated all men as children of wrath by nature, Ephesians 2:3. The Lord expressly says in John 3:3,5,6, that a man must be born again and must be born of water and of the Spirit, if he is to see the kingdom of God. What is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the Spirit is spirit.²² From the use of these particular passages it seems evident that the need of children for the grace of baptism consists in their original sin which they have from the time of their conception.

The other reason for baptizing children is their capability of receiving the grace of baptism. Even though Höfling does not define this capability precisely, it is evident from what he says elsewhere that this capability is part of the nature of the child (geistige und leibliche Natur) as opposed to the spiritual or mental part of the child (geistige Persönlichkeit). As will be shown below, this mental part is not actively present in infants. The children's capability for receiving the grace of baptism is taught by the pericopes of Jesus' blessing the children. To the children belongs the kingdom of heaven. All those who want to enter must become like they are. If adults are to enter the kingdom, they must become like children. When children receive the grace of baptism, they receive it without resisting it. That children are nonresistant in receiving the grace of baptism follows quite naturally from Höfling's concept

²² Ibid., p. 100.

of baptism working on the geistige und leibliche Natur. When the grace of baptism works on children, they do not respond with faith as do adults.²³ However, Höfling is very careful to point out that they are not completely devoid of every aspect of faith. He goes on to define precisely what he means when he says that children are not completely devoid of faith, though they have not the faith of adults. It is pointed out that faith is not a product of our own human knowledge, emotions and desires; rather it is the work of the Spirit and of grace. In its essence faith is defined as the receiving of the Spirit, of grace, and of the power of the Lord. In the sense that the children receive these through baptism, it can be said that they have faith.²⁴ What Höfling means in saying that children have faith in a certain way is that they are objects of Him Who creates faith, namely the Spirit, and they have the fruits of faith, namely the Spirit, grace, and power. Even though children are objects of the cause of faith and have the effects of faith, they themselves are not engaged in the act of either knowing or trusting. They possess the Spirit and other blessings immediately without coming to belief themselves. So when Höfling says that they have faith in a certain sense of the word, he does not mean that they believe and trust in Christ. What is meant is that children are objects of the Spirit's working and have some of the fruits of faith. That children do not have faith as an act of trusting in Christ will be made more clear in the discussion of infant baptism and faith, which will follow below. It will also be made clearer by what Höfling says about the manner in which children receive

²³Ibid. "Freilich haben die Kinder den Glauben nicht, und können ihn nicht haben im Sinne der Erwachsenen."

²⁴Ibid., p. 101.

the grace of baptism.

When children receive the grace of baptism, they offer no resistance to it. The situation of children is quite different from that of people who already have a developed consciousness and will. These people have to take their consciousness and will into control so that they do not shut out the divine grace as it is found in baptism. Mature persons must make an effort not to resist obstinately the grace in baptism. It is required of them that they come into agreement with this grace. Before such persons can appropriate the grace of baptism to themselves, they must employ their minds and their wills in hearing the preached word. However, the situation is quite different where there is no will and where the mind is not conscious of itself. Here it is not required that these persons employ their minds and wills in hearing the preached word. For them it is an impossibility to resist the grace of baptism with either the mind or the will. Children are persons without mind and will. To baptize adults against their will or without their knowledge would be foolish, but with children it is different. They cannot hinder the grace of baptism, since they are not capable of reasoning and willing.²⁵ With children, thinking, knowing, and willing are phenomena that develop later. The working of the grace of God in the child is said by H5lling to be like the nature of the child

²⁵Ibid. Franz Frank, known as the dogmatist of the Erlangen Theology, similarly taught that baptism demanded no responsive action from its object. "Wir kennen die Taufe als Sacrament der Wiedergeburt, welche ihrem Begriff nach keine entgegenkommende oder mitwirkende Action fordert; wir kennen das neutestamentliche Heil als solches, welches nur die aptitudo passiva um dem Menschen sich zu vermitteln voraussetzt." System der Christlichen Wahrheit (Dritte verbesserte Auflage; Erlangen und Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1894), II, 285.

in that it is unconscious. In Höfling's anthropology the consciousness is in the rational part of the person (geistige Persönlichkeit), and not in the natural part (geistige und leibliche Natur). The grace of baptism works in the natural part where there is no consciousness. Therefore the working of baptism can be considered a working of grace which does not involve consciousness on the nature of the child where there is no consciousness. Thus the working of grace on children is different from the working of grace on adults. On children grace works immediately on the nature of the child and on adults it works through the mind. To support his concept that the Holy Spirit can be given to children without the mind, Höfling mentions that John the Baptist was filled with the Holy Spirit when he was still in the womb of his mother.²⁶

The reasons which Höfling has offered here for the baptism of children are their need which comes from original sin and the capability of their nature to receive this sacrament.²⁷

Essential to Höfling's understanding of baptism is the close connection in which this sacrament stands to the preached word. This is based on his understanding of Matthew 28:19f. where making disciples or Christians consists necessarily of applying both baptism and the preached word.²⁸

²⁶ Höfling, op. cit., I, 101f.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 102.

²⁸ That baptizing and teaching were both necessary for becoming a disciple was explicitly taught by many who held to the "naturalistic" working of baptism. Frank approvingly cites Johann Christian von Hofmann in his interpretation of Matthew 28:19f. "Gewisz ist die Meinung der genannten Stelle diese, dasz das $\mu\alpha\beta\eta\tau\epsilon\upsilon\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$ in der zwiefachen Form genannten Stelle diese, des $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\zeta\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$ und $\delta\epsilon\delta\acute{\alpha}\sigma\kappa\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\alpha\iota$ mit wohlbemessener dieser Actionen, sich vollziehen solle, keineswegs diese,

It is this relationship in which baptism and the preached word stand indissolubly together which determines for Höfling the circumstances under which infant baptism may be dispensed. Since baptism and preaching are both necessary to bring the entire salvation to man, it naturally follows that the baptizing of children be followed by instruction. Baptism must be followed by preaching, since neither of them is permitted to be isolated from, separated from, or in any way taken out of the relationship with the other. As was stated before, both work in qualitatively different ways toward the same goal of imparting the entire salvation to the individual. To accomplish this task both must work. Neither baptism nor the preached word is sufficient by itself to impart the full salvation.

For children this means that baptism must be followed by the preached word or instruction in the word. It is not necessary for the word to be applied before baptism in the case of children, since they are not mentally capable of dealing with the preached word. Their nature, as has been demonstrated, is capable of receiving baptism with its accompanying grace. However, after baptism it is necessary that the preached word be applied to the child. Without the preached word the grace given in baptism can never become a possession involving their knowledge and will. In those cases where the preached word is not applied to the baptized children, they lose the grace of baptism, because they have not come under the influence of the word.

das καὶ ἡ τεύχευ solle nur nicht ohne ein ἄπεισχευ und ein ῥεδασχευ bleiben (v. Hofmann)." Op. cit., p. 283. Cf. also Ernst Hory, Die Taufe als Kindertaufe auf Grund heiliger Schrift (Stuttgart: n.p., 1872), pp. 26f., and Hans Lassen Martensen, Die christliche Taufe und die baptische Frage (Gotha und Hamburg: Andreas Pepthes, 1843), pp. 23f.

In these cases through baptism the child possesses grace in his geistige und leibliche Natur, but not in his geistige Persönlichkeit. The latter only happens through the preached word. Where grace exists only in the geistige und leibliche Natur and is not given to the geistige Persönlichkeit through the preached word, grace is taken away completely from the individual. This does not apply to children who do not develop normally.²⁹

Since baptism and the preached word belong inseparably together as the two means for making disciples or for imparting the full salvation to the individual, infant baptism should take place only within the scope of the Christian family and Christian congregation. In such a situation both family and congregation can give the assurance that baptismal grace will be complemented by the application of the preached word. Thus the capability of receiving the grace of baptism is not the only determinant factor in dispensing baptism. Also essential is the guarantee that the preached word will not be lacking to the child, since it is necessary for maintaining the grace given in baptism. Since no assurance can be given that the preached word will be given to children of Jews and heathen, such children are not to be baptized. Höfling in no way denied that such children have a need for the grace of baptism and are capable of receiving it.³⁰ What excludes them from it, according to Höfling, is the concept that baptism must stand in an inseparable relationship to the preached word.

²⁹Höfling, op. cit., I, 103.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 103f.

The necessary connection between baptism and the preached word becomes even clearer in Höffling's discussion concerning the baptizing of the children of known unbelievers. First he treats the matter of those children who are snatched away from their parents and then baptized without their consent. Such a practice cannot be condoned, since the grace of God can never be thought of as going along the way of sin and injustice. Children born within non-Christian surroundings are not to be considered objects of God's call of grace in baptism, if their baptism cannot be performed without their being kidnapped from their parents. To baptize the children of Jews and heathen without the knowledge and will of the parents is a crime against the parental right. Such a baptism is also a crime against the sacrament of baptism. A crime or sacrilege against baptism occurs when it is separated from the preached word in which it finds its necessary complement. In baptizing the children of unbelievers, the danger of sacrilege against the sacrament of baptism becomes greater, since there is little chance that the preached word will be applied.³¹

In his discussion of those cases where unbelieving parents request baptism for their children Höffling further demonstrates that baptism and the preached word necessarily belong together. The consent of unbelieving parents is not sufficient reason to baptize their children. The danger of sacrilege which occurs when baptism is separated from the preached word is present, since the children remain under the care and authority of their

³¹ Ibid., p. 125.

unbelieving parents. Such a baptism is not a violation of the parental rights, but it is a sacrilege against baptism.³²

Of itself baptism can never bring salvation to those children who remain in this life and whose consciousnesses and wills develop according to the laws of nature. Baptism alone cannot bring the entire salvation.³³ To be effective the preached word must be added. Unless the Holy Spirit follows with His working in the preaching of the word, that which was actually and objectively appropriated to the child through baptism cannot become for him a possession of which he is really aware and which he desires. Without the addition of the preached word to baptism that which was objectively given in this sacrament can never become a subjective possession which involves both the mind and the will.³⁴ When Höfling refers to that which is objectively given in baptism, he is referring to the Spirit, the power of the Lord, and His grace. In baptism

³²Ibid., pp. 126f.

³³Frank, working with the principle that both baptism and the spoken word were necessary for bringing salvation to the individual, said that baptism administered without parental consent was no baptism. "Das keine Taufe ist, wo man Kinder ohne Wissen und wider Willen ihrer Aeltern, in offenbarem Widerspruch even gegen die Einsetzung welche das $\delta\epsilon\delta\alpha\acute{o}\kappa\epsilon\iota\upsilon$ mit dem $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$ zusammenbindet, 'tauft' und sie dann dem Heidenthum überlässt." *Op. cit.*, p. 288.

With such a concept of baptism, Frank makes the validity of infant baptism depend in part upon the parental consent. The exact opposite position is taken by Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther. "Endlich wenn die Taufe einem Kinde wider den Willen der Eltern schon ertheilt ist, dann ist dieselbe nichts desto weniger giltig und kräftig, wenn alle wesentliche Stücke der Taufe vorhanden gewesen sind, wozu der Wille der Eltern nicht so schlechterdings erforderlich ist; indem hier die Regel der Rechtsgelehrten statt hat. Es gibt vieles, was eine erst einzugehende Ehe hindert, die eingegangene aber nicht auflöst; ebenso gehört nemlich mehreres zur Ertheilung der Taufe, was die ertheilte nicht ungiltig macht. Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie (St. Louis: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u.a. Staaten, 1872), p. 126.

³⁴Höfling, I, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

these are given as gifts to the nature of the child, but not to his mind or spirit. Since these gifts are given to the geistige und leibliche Natur and not to the geistige Persönlichkeit, it is said that the gifts are given objectively. Their being given does not involve the mind; hence they are not subjectively given.

The situation of children who have only received baptism is similar to that of those adults who have only received the preached word. In the case of baptized children it is demanded that the preached word be applied to them. With believing adults it is demanded that baptism be given to them. Both children who have only received baptism and adults who have only received the preached word do not enjoy complete salvation. This can only happen when the consciousness and will of each individual appropriates to himself through the working of the preached word that which baptism gives.³⁵

Höfling then concludes, quite naturally, that regeneration for both children and adults is complete only when the blessings of baptism are appropriated through the preached word. Thus adults who believe the preached word but who lack baptism are not fully regenerate. They lack baptism which is essential for complete regeneration. Such adults stand in a state between being regenerate and unregenerate. They cannot be considered unregenerate because they have already taken to themselves the saving word of God through preaching. Grace and the Spirit of God are already present in these persons and active in them. Even though they are started on the way to the new life, they are still not regenerate, because by themselves neither baptism nor the preached word can work regeneration. Baptism can give the blessings of salvation and the preached

³⁵Ibid.

word can create trust within the person. Since full salvation or regeneration consists in having both baptism's blessings of salvation and the trust created by the preached word, neither baptism nor the preached word can work full regeneration. Each of them can initiate the Spirit's work of regeneration, but by itself neither of them can complete regeneration. Regeneration is complete only when preaching is added to baptism in the case of children or when baptism is added to preaching in the case of adults. That regeneration is incomplete in those persons who have not received both baptism and the preached word but only one of these is reflected in the church's attitude to them. The church does not consider adults before their baptism and children before the conclusion of their instruction or before their confirmation as being really part of the faithful or as being self-sufficient members of the body of Christ with full rights. As believing adults without baptism lack the objective part of regeneration, so baptized children without instruction in the word lack the subjective part. This means that through the preached word unbaptized adults believe in Christ; nevertheless, they do not have the blessings of salvation given only in baptism. Baptized children, on the other hand, have the blessings of salvation, such as the Holy Spirit, for their possession, but they are still without faith. For this reason it can be said that adults lack the objective part of regeneration and children the subjective part. Just as adults receive the objective part of regeneration in baptism, so baptized children receive the subjective part when they receive Christian training and instruction.³⁶ At that time they can come to faith.

³⁶Ibid., p. 139.

A concern of all Lutheran theologians in the nineteenth century who discussed infant baptism was the relationship between the baptizing of infants and faith. Schleiermacher said that if faith were not present at the time of baptism, such a baptism would be an erroneously applied baptism. Even though infant baptism was an erroneously applied baptism, this type of baptism could be justified because of the future faith of the child. Höfling follows Schleiermacher in maintaining that infant baptism is given in view of the child's future faith. However Höfling speaks of three types of faith in which infant baptism is administered. These three types are faith as the child's ability to receive the Holy Spirit, faith as the belief of the church, and faith as an active trust in Christ, which first appears when the child comes to reason. The last concept is similar to Schleiermacher's. Infant baptism is administered to the child on the basis of all three types of "faith." The first type or part of faith present in the child is the child's own receptibility to the Holy Spirit and divine grace. These he receives without resisting. This faith is sufficient for the salvation of children. They do not need to be vicariously saved by the faith of others as if their faith were insufficient to save them.³⁷ This first type of faith present in infants at baptism is really the ability of their nature (geistige und leibliche Natur) to receive the Holy Spirit. As was shown above, this type of faith does not involve the child in an act of trust in Christ.

The second type of faith on which children are baptized is the faith of the church. If children of Christians were baptized in view of their

³⁷Höfling, op. cit., II, 231.

own "faith," then all those upon whom we may lay our hands should be baptized without discrimination in the hope that they would be saved. If the "faith" created by baptism would be adequate for obtaining complete salvation, then the application of the preached word would become superfluous. Since the preached word can never be superfluous for those persons who have attained the use of their reason, the giving of the guarantee that the preached word will be applied to the child when he attains the use of his reason is a necessary condition for dispensing infant baptism. It is the faith of the church which supplies this guarantee that the preached word will be applied to the child. The faith of the church also has another function in that it places the child into a relationship from which faith as a trust in Christ can arise. This relationship which was created by baptism entitles and qualifies the child to hear the preached word and to have that faith which arises only from the preached word. The faith of the church and not the faith of the child is responsible for bringing the child to baptism which in turn puts the child into a position to hear the preached word.³⁸ From the preached word arises that type of faith which is understood as a trust in Christ. It is faith as trust in Christ which is the third type of faith on which infant baptism is based.

The third type of faith is called by Höfling the fides explicita. This type or part of faith first comes when the child has attained the use of reason. It is still not present at the time of the baptism of infants. The fides explicita can come only through the preaching of the word. Before the use of their reason the fides implicita or the children's possession of the Holy Spirit and grace in their nature is sufficient for

³⁸ ibid., pp. 231f.

their salvation. However when children have attained the use of reason, the fides explicita is necessary. Since baptism is administered to infants not only on the basis of their fides implicita, but also their fides explicita, the fides ecclesiae is important. The fides ecclesiae gives the guarantee that the preached word will be given to the child so that his fides implicita can become fides explicita.³⁹

At the time of the child's baptism, he has two parts of faith which are sufficient as long as his reason does not develop. These two parts of faith are the ability to receive the Holy Spirit and the actual reception of the Holy Spirit who is given through the preached word to the child after he has obtained the use of his reason. The faith which is worked through the preached word is that faith which is active.⁴⁰

It should be noted that Höffling has used the term faith to designate four different phenomena. Three of these types of "faith" are the basis upon which infant baptism is administered. These are the receptibility of the child for the Holy Spirit, the faith of the church, and the active faith which comes only from the preached word. The fourth type or part of faith is the immediate effect of infant baptism. This effect is the immediate reception of the Holy Spirit in the nature of the child through baptism.⁴¹ With Höffling's understanding of different types of faith, he can at the same time be in agreement with Schleiermacher who claimed that the infant baptism was given in view of the future faith of the child and

³⁹Ibid., p. 232.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 233.

⁴¹Theodore Kliefoth also identifies the child's reception of the Holy Spirit with faith. "Mit dem Kinderglauben aber hat es gar keine Schwierigkeit, wenn man zuerst unter Glauben versteht, was darunter

with those who said that through baptism something was given to the child. That Höffling can speak of different parts or types of faith is possible only in connection with his anthropology which divided the person into two parts, the geistige und leibliche Natur and the geistige Persönlichkeit. It was in the nature that the Holy Spirit dwelt through baptism and in the mind or spirit that the preached word produced trust and knowledge.

Höffling's understanding of the relationship between baptism and preaching and his concept of faith is reflected in his attitude toward the baptismal liturgy. The liturgy with which Höffling was familiar addressed the questions concerning faith to the child who was to be baptized. He interprets these questions which are addressed to the child as concerning his future faith and not the present faith of the child. The literal meaning of the words indicate that faith is present. If the questions are interpreted as concerning the future faith of the child and not the present faith, then Höffling believes that there can be no objections to using these questions. The questions are not to be considered as dealing with anything present in the child before baptism or anything present after baptism. They concern rather that faith which comes through the preaching of the word. For the child such faith is not a present reality, but remains something in the future. The preaching of the word, which is the cause of the future faith with which the questions have to do, is necessarily required because of its inseparable connection with baptism. The questions are said also to deal with the confession and vow to which the

verstanden werden muss, nämlich das Empfangen des Geistes und der Kraft des Herrn." Theorie des Kultus der evangelischen Kirche (Parchim und Ludwigslust: n.p., 1844), p. 184. Both Höffling and Klieroth have confused the cause of faith, the Spirit, with faith, which is trust in God.

child is obligated in baptism.⁴² When Hüfling speaks about the future faith concerning which the questions are addressed in the liturgy, he is using faith in the strict sense of the term as involving a knowledge and trust in God. The fact that he rules out any possibility of the questions having anything to do with the capability of the child to receive the Spirit and the actual reception of the same indicates that when faith is used by Hüfling to describe these last two phenomena, it is not being used in its original sense but solely in a derived sense. Faith in the strict sense of the term as involving actively knowing and trusting in God is for Hüfling possible only through the application of the preached word. If the capability of receiving the Spirit and the actual reception of the same were really faith, then Hüfling would have said that the questions used in baptism would have concerned these.

The institution of sponsors also reflects Hüfling's understanding of baptism and the preached word as well as his concept of faith. The function of the sponsors is threefold in that they are said to represent the child, the congregation, and the parents. Since baptism places obligations towards God and the church on the child, he needs guarantors and representatives in accepting these obligations. The sponsors serve as these guarantors and representatives.⁴³ With regard to the Apostles' Creed they also perform a function for the child. The Creed recited in the rite of infant baptism does not concern a faith which exists before or comes through baptism. The faith which is confessed in the Apostles' Creed for the child concerns the faith which comes through the preached

⁴²Hüfling, op. cit., II, 233.

⁴³Ibid., p. 240.

word. Thus the confession is obligatory for the child in an anticipatory way.⁴⁴ The confession gives future obligations to the child which can be fulfilled when the preached word is applied. The sponsors represent the child in obligating him to the confession made at baptism. These obligations can only be fulfilled when the preached word is given.⁴⁵

The sponsors also have a function in representing the congregation. They bring to baptism the child who has been born within the Christian congregation and in the stead of the Christian congregation they make sure that a proper Christian rite is performed. They also represent the congregation in that they give a special guarantee that the preaching of the word and Christian education shall follow. Sponsors are also the representatives of the parents who are the first members of the congregation who concern themselves with the child.⁴⁶ That sponsors represent the congregation is in keeping with Hüfling's concept that baptism is administered to children not only on their own capability, but also on the faith of the church, the fides ecclesiae. It is the fides ecclesiae that gives the assurance that the preached word will be added to baptism. In this way baptism and the preached word remain in union with one another and no sacrilege is committed against baptism.

Conclusion

Basic to Hüfling's entire discussion of infant baptism is his

⁴⁴Theodor Kliefoth also recognizes the sponsors' duties as making a confession for the child which he will later make himself. Op. cit., p. 186.

⁴⁵Hüfling, op. cit., II, 242.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 243.

understanding of the necessary relationship between baptism and the preached word, if complete regeneration is to be brought about in the individual. For the possession of complete salvation both baptism and the preached word must be applied. This concept is derived from Matthew 28:19f. where making disciples is to be accomplished by both baptizing and preaching. Should one of these be lacking, complete regeneration is not effected. Such a person is still not a full-fledged member of the body of Christ. Much can be said about the concepts that H8fling has derived from Matthew 28:19f. He never mentions another scriptural passage in support of his concept that full regeneration must be brought about by both baptism and the preached word. In fact there is much that can be advanced against this position. In demanding that baptism and the preached word are both necessary for complete regeneration, H8fling has created a state of partial regeneration in which baptized infants who lack the preached word and believing adults without baptism are to be placed. However, the existence of a third category between regeneration and unregeneration is not known in the Scriptures. The big question presents itself whether people who die in this state are saved or damned. H8fling's understanding of baptism and the preached word results in a degrading of both. Baptism can give the Spirit, the power of the Lord, and grace, but it cannot give or work faith. Even though baptism can give the Third Person of the Trinity to the child, it does not have the capability to work faith. The preached word can work faith, but it cannot give the blessings of salvation. This is the work of baptism alone. What H8fling has done is to create a division of labor between baptism and the preached word, and to get the task of salvation completed both must be applied. With the degrading of the preached word, faith is subsequently degraded also. Faith is no longer necessary in the

child's possessing the Holy Spirit and the other blessings of salvation. All these blessings the Spirit gives directly to the nature geistige und leibliche Natur without using faith as a medium. In the salvation of children through baptism, faith is by-passed. Underlying Höfling's understanding of the relationship of baptism to the preached word is a definite, but not clearly enunciated anthropology. This anthropology divides the person into natural (geistige und leibliche Natur) and mental (geistige Persönlichkeit) halves. Should this anthropology prove to be in error, it would no longer be possible for the Spirit to dwell in the natural part of the child. However, these questions concerning this anthropology shall be discussed more extensively under those theologians who have provided a more extensive presentation on the matter, such as Thomasius and Kezschwitz. That which makes Höfling distinct among the men treated in this chapter is his understanding of regeneration which requires both baptism and the preached word. Such a concept presents the difficulty of establishing a third category between regeneration and unregeneration. However in the matter of salvation we have to be with the Lord or against Him. There is no middle ground.

Hans Lassen Martensen

In 1843 when Martensen was professor of theology at Copenhagen, he published his monograph on baptism, Die christliche Taufe und die baptische Frage. It was published again in 1860 after he had become the bishop of Seeland. Though Martensen was Danish, he participated in the main streams of German theology of his day and many of his books were translated into German, including his Christliche Dogmatik. Martensen has the same understanding of the relation of baptism and the word and the working of each

on one of the two parts of man as does Höffling. Both men also agreed that only the preached word could really work faith in mature persons. Well handled by Martensen is the description of how baptism affects the child's nature and how the effects of baptism develop into a real and active faith. Our study begins with an examination of Martensen's understanding of baptism.

Baptism

Martensen regards baptism as that act through which the Lord chooses His disciples. This choosing through baptism has taken the place of the Lord's personal choosing which He performed during the time of His earthly life. Since the disciples were personally chosen by the Lord, they did not need to be baptized. With St. Paul it was different. He had to be baptized, because he was chosen after the Lord had left the earth.⁴⁷ This concept of baptism being necessary only for those who did not know Him personally is also found in Schleiermacher's Der Christliche Glaube.

Like Höffling, Martensen presents his concept of baptism in its relationship to the preached word. For Martensen baptism and not the preached word is the basis of faith. Baptism is the basis of faith since it actually gives Christ to the individual who can build his faith on Christ. This giving of Christ does not take place in the preached word. When the preached word works faith in the individual before baptism is administered, such a faith is unproductive. When baptism is applied, the faith created by the preached word becomes active and productive.

⁴⁷Martensen, op. cit., p. 11.

The faith brought about by the preached word, whether it be before or after baptism, comes into existence under the circumstances of time and experience. But in baptism a new dimension is given to faith. In baptism faith finds its everlasting foundation in Christ. The preached word creates a faith which is limited by time and place, but baptism gives as a foundation to faith Christ Who is not subject to either time or place. The great mystery of faith is that Christ places Himself into organic relationship with the baptized person. Through this relationship Christ as the foundation of faith becomes the source of the further development of faith and of Christian enthusiasm to do works. Baptism is responsible for creating that organic union between God and man from which come all other blessings, including faith and good works.⁴⁸ The function of preaching is defined in relation to baptism, since it is the task of preaching to bring the unbaptized person to baptism.

In baptism the faith of the unbaptized is established. For those who have already been baptized, preaching develops the mystery of faith previously imparted through baptism.⁴⁹ Developing the mystery of faith means to develop faith as an act of knowing and trusting in the Christ Who by baptism dwells within the nature of the person. Infants who have the mystery of faith through baptism, still need the preached word to develop this mystery into a living active faith. Martensen regards baptism as more than just a making grace visible and a declaration and a pledge of grace. The development of the Christian life is possible only through the real impartation of grace in baptism.⁵⁰ Martensen's relationship between the preached word and baptism is the same as Hüfiling's. For both

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 12f.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 16.

theologians baptism is an actual bestowal of grace, while preaching is a declaration of grace.

Infant Baptism

Martensen finds no explicit command in the Scriptures to baptize infants. The lack of a specific command concerning infant baptism can be explained easily when it is realized that the Scriptures were written from a missionary point of view. The first task of the apostles was to establish Christian congregations. Here Christian education would be possible. Without Christian education the baptizing of children would be without any purpose, since baptism is inseparable from instruction in the word. Martensen's assertion that baptism would be without purpose if Christian education were not available follows from his understanding of the relationship between baptism and the preached word. The baptizing of children requires that the preached word be given later. Without the preached word the mystery of faith, given in baptism, cannot develop into a living active faith. For this reason baptizing children where there would be no Christian education available would be without purpose. Without the preached word the mystery of faith does not develop. This same thought is expressed by Höffling who says that the fides ecclesiae must first be present as a guarantee of the future application of the word before infant baptism can be administered.

The lack of an explicit command concerning infant baptism does not trouble Martensen. For him it is the Spirit and not merely the letter who should lead us to a right understanding and to a correct use of the divine institutions. Working from the principle that doctrines do not have to be proved in a literal (buchstäbliche) way from the Scriptures, he dismisses some of those passages which have been traditionally used in

the matter of infant baptism, such as Mark 10:14-15, 1 Corinthians 7:14 and 1:16.⁵¹

For Martensen infant baptism can be established from the relationship between baptism and faith as it is found in his exegesis of Matthew 28:19f. and in the apostolic practice. The key to understanding Matthew 28:19f. is the interpretation of *μαθητεύσατε* which is to be interpreted "make disciples" rather than "teach." This making of disciples consists of two parts, baptizing and teaching. If the church in the course of time desires to remain true to the command of her Lord, it must begin by applying baptism first and then follow up with teaching or preaching from which will develop the conscious life of faith.⁵²

Martensen's relationship between baptism and faith as it is based on Matthew 28:19f. is identical to the relationship between baptism and the word. The preached word or Christian teaching is always connected with that part of faith which deals with knowledge. Therefore Matthew 28:19f. with its word order does not oppose Martensen's concept that first baptism gives the mystery of faith, which is Christ, and then the preached word or Christian education develops this mystery of faith into a living active faith. Since according to the word order baptizing comes before the application of the word, Martensen sees in infant baptism a correct carrying out of the command of Matthew 28:19f. In fact, the more infant baptism is introduced into the world, the more the Lord's command to make

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 23.

⁵² Ibid., p. 24.

disciples of all nations through baptism and Christian instruction is carried out.⁵³ Martensen also sees in the practice of the apostles the order in which baptism precedes faith. It is said that the apostles did not recognize anyone as being regenerate before they were baptized. To be eligible for baptism it was required only that the person have the receptivity for the kingdom of God which is common to all. Martensen's concept of the common receptivity of all men is a reference to the ability of the natural part of men to possess Christ. He goes on to say that a complete faith was not demanded of the person who was to be baptized. When the term faith is attributed to an unbaptized person, it does not refer to having faith itself but to the desire to have faith. Neither faith nor regeneration were required of the candidates for apostolic baptism, since the beginning of faith is first mediated through baptism.⁵⁴ That common receptivity for the kingdom of God which the apostles required of adults before they were baptized is the same receptivity which children already possess by nature.⁵⁵

Martensen then proceeds to describe this receptivity which children have and on account of which they can receive baptism. The children's natural receptivity for baptism and their need for baptism because of their sin are the two reasons for the baptizing of children. However, of these two reasons the child's receptivity is by far the more important. The concept of receptivity connected with Martensen's anthropology divides the person into the natural part and mental or spiritual part. With

⁵³Ibid.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 26.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 28.

Martensen the child's nature even assumes a certain holy quality which to some extent overshadows any need that the child might have for baptism. With Hbiling the need of the child is more extensively discussed and is the first reason for administering baptism. For Martensen the nature of the child with its receptivity for the grace of baptism is the foremost reason for administering baptism.

The receptivity required of those who are to receive baptism is neither the receptivity for a particular gift of grace nor is it a receptivity found in some people and not in others. The required receptivity can be defined as the common receptivity of our human nature for the new creation and for Christ. This receptivity is to be understood as the possibility which our human nature has of being redeemed and of reaching the point of perfection.

It may further be defined as the slumbering of that which is characteristic of our human nature. It is an indecisive shadowy condition within the nature of man which can also be described negatively as the non-resistance to grace. This non-resistance is expressed well by the Roman Catholic formula, obicem non ponere, which is the lack of resistance. This receptivity required for those who are to receive baptism is found in children.⁵⁶ In addition to having a certain receptivity for baptism which has been described from the negative side as the lack of ability to resist, the child also has within himself a positive element which also makes him a fitting candidate for baptism. This positive element which the child has within its nature is an impulse or an internal drive towards the kingdom of God and a deep longing for Christ. This impulse towards the kingdom of God exists in the child's nature along

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 29ff.

with the impulse towards the world.⁵⁷ Thus the nature of the child has two opposing characteristics or parts. Part of the nature is directed away from God and the other part towards Him. In that part of the nature directed towards God is the seat of the receptivity which is the prerequisite for receiving baptism.

The receptivity required for those who are going to receive baptism exists naturally in children and does not have to be awakened in them as it has to be done with adults. Children by nature are in the same condition in which adults are who hear about the universality of sin and salvation in the preached word. When adults receive this preached word, that drive for the kingdom of God which is within them breaks through to the surface. At this time the "old I" and the world are no longer able to hinder the working of salvation. The preached word removes the sin which has covered up the original nature, so that baptism can go to work on it unhindered by sin. When the preached word has worked so that the nature of the person again breaks through and comes to the surface, baptism is said to become infant baptism. The preached word puts the adult where the child is by nature. When the adult is brought to the position where a child is by nature then he can receive baptism.⁵⁸ Thus Martensen can say that after the preached word has done its task, baptism becomes infant baptism.

The receptivity of children to baptism is further shown through the comparison of infant baptism with the incarnation. The incarnate God becoming a child and His undergoing a development in His life, while the

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 31.

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 31f.

fulness of His Godhead slept, is evidence that the divine nature can be united with the human nature at any level of conscious development. This can take place even before there is any consciousness at all.⁵⁹

The comparison made by Martensen is that Christ's possessing the Godhead is similar to the child's possessing Christ in that in both there is no consciousness. Of course in using such a comparison Martensen is presupposing a certain Christology which denies that the omniscient attributes of the divine nature were communicated to the human nature. However, we shall discuss this same problem in connection with Ernst Hory by whom this matter is treated more fully and explicitly. With Martensen it is only implicit.

Another reason for baptizing children, in addition to their receptivity is their need for this sacrament. For Martensen it is Pelagian to say that children do not need a Savior because they are without guilt. To maintain the innocence of children and to deny their need of baptism and the Savior is to deny the sinfulness of the human nature, and to regard the Lord's childhood as superfluous and insignificant for the work of redemption.⁶⁰ In speaking of the sinfulness of the human nature, Martensen is referring to original sin without using the term. Implicit in his argument concerning the superfluousness of the Lord's childhood, if children are to be regarded as innocent, is the doctrine of the active obedience of Christ. The doctrine of the active obedience of Christ is that Christ in His life was fulfilling the law perfectly for us, who in

⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 34f.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 35.

all parts of our life have sinned. Thus Christ's holy and sinless infancy redeems the sinful infancy of man. It is on this account that Martensen says that the maintaining of the innocence of children makes the Lord's childhood superfluous and insignificant in His work of redemption.

In baptism the individual acts of sins are not redeemed. However, in baptism the sinfulness of the human race which is the perverted nature is broken.⁶¹ After baptism has been applied, the sinful nature of man no longer has to be a hindrance to salvation and the baptized person is able to desist from further engaging in sinful deeds. Baptism does not give sanctification and ethical perfection in any particular degree; but it gives rather the possibility of being sanctified and perfected. Through baptism the newly created human race is planted into the body.⁶²

Martensen speaks of specific effects of infant baptism. Infant baptism is not only the promise of God's grace, it is the giving of the actual gift of God's grace. When Martensen speaks about the giving of grace to children through baptism, he is speaking about giving children the chance to predestinate themselves to salvation. In baptism the child is the object and not the subject of the action. But as the object of God's grace, he also becomes the subject who should predestinate himself in

⁶¹Georg Stosch, who follows Martensen very closely in his understanding of baptism, claimed that baptism destroyed original guilt. "Die Taufe hat ein in die Zukunft gewandtes Antlitz. Sie tilgt die Erbschuld ebenso, wie sie die ganze kommende Entwicklung unter die Macht der Vergebung der Sünden." *Zeitgedanken über die Taufe* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1902), p. 85. Ernst Hory also connected the efficacy of baptism with original sin. "So sehen wir in der Kindertaufe das Antidon gegen die Erbschaft der natürlichen Geburt, die Erbsünde." *Op. cit.*, p. 120.

⁶²Martensen, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

freedom to Christ. Through baptism he is able to act in predestinating himself to the freedom which is found in Christ. The predestination which is given to the child in baptism is not to be understood as a finished predestination. Because of the election of grace in baptism, the child receives the call of grace to freedom. It is the task of those who have been elected in baptism to develop the gift given in baptism by spiritual devotions and works, through the use of the word and prayer, and through the congregational life and the Lord's Supper.⁶³ Thus the election which children receive in their baptism is the election to a position or condition from which they can decide for themselves whether or not they will give heed to God's call of grace. That baptism gives to children the possibility of sanctification and not the sanctification itself conforms with his concept that they are given a chance to predestinate themselves rather than being given a fixed predestination.

Through baptism the child becomes the unconscious carrier of Christ's objective righteousness. He becomes a christophorus, a bearer of Christ, without knowing it. The child is placed into an organic relationship with Christ and in this relationship the seed of faith is given.⁶⁴ When Martensen refers to the seed of faith, he is referring to what he has previously designated the mystery of faith, which is Christ. From this mystery of faith which is really the indwelling of Christ in the nature, active faith arises. Undoubtedly Martensen uses the term "seed," since the word "seed" carries the concept of being able to produce something in the future. The seed of faith is not faith, but it is the potentiality

⁶³Ibid., pp. 44ff.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 54f.

for having faith.⁶⁵ Objective salvation is also given to the child as a gift and from this gift faith then develops. Faith is the product of the gift of baptism. The grace given in baptism is described as the mother of faith and not the result of faith.⁶⁶ When the child is planted into Christ through baptism, he is also given the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is the ultimate cause of any development that might occur in the child

⁶⁵The phrase, Keim des Glaubens is frequently used by those teaching a "naturalistic" working of infant baptism. Martensen uses this phrase interchangeably with Princip des Glaubens and Wesen des Glaubens. These phrases do not refer to faith itself. They refer to the cause of faith, the Holy Spirit, and the object of faith, Christ. These terms suggest that something is given to the natural side of the child. From this, faith will later develop. Though these terms might speak of faith, it is a false conclusion to assume that the child is engaged in the act of trusting. A certain Pastor Dienemann wrote that little children "können noch nicht glauben." Then he can go on to say: "Mit der Taufe, mit der Gabe des heiligen Geistes, mit der Wiedergeburt wird aber nun auch ganz selbstverständlich in den Kindern der Keim des Glaubens hineingelegt." Die heilige Taufe im Licht des göttlichen Worts und der Gegenwart (Leipzig: Reichert, 1894), pp. 53ff.

Franz Reinhold Frank, who also denied infant faith, still could say that in baptism the child receives "die Initiative zur Weckung und Herstellung des Glaubens." "Initiative" is for Frank what "Keim" is for Martensen. Op. cit., p. 288.

Even the rather conservative Lutheran dogmatician, Alexander von Oettingen, denied the possibility of faith to infants because of insufficient consciousness. Still he asserted that through baptism the child received the "Keim des neuen Lebens in Christo." Lutherische Dogmatik (München: Beck'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1902), II, 417.

Gotthardt Romberg said that in baptism God worked on the child through the form of a "Trieb oder Keim." "Kindertaufe und Wiedergeburt," Mecklenburgisches Kirchen- und Zeitblatt, XXXI (1903), 405.

Ernst Sartorius employed the same kind of terminology in describing the effects of baptism. "Die Taufhandlung gleicht der Einsenkung eines Samens, oder Legung eines Keims, wobei die Handlung selbst nur einem bestimmten Zeitpunkt angehört und einen Ausgang bildet, aus welchem dann in kontinuierlicher Folge eine neue Lebensentwicklung hervorgeht, die in Zeit und Raum sich immer weiter ausbreitet." Die Lehre von der heiligen Liebe (Zweite Auflage; Stuttgart: Liesching, 1855), II, 104.

⁶⁶Martensen, op. cit., p. 55.

and of any receptivity that the child has for Christ. It is the task of the Spirit to mediate the correct use of the gifts of Christ.

Now the Spirit which Christ gives to the child is the same Spirit who is active in the Christian congregation. Since the Spirit is active in the congregation, He makes the child in whom He is dwelling a member of the congregation. It is in the congregation that the Spirit leads souls to Christ and confirms them in their baptism.⁶⁷ In referring to the Spirit who is active in the congregation, Martensen is referring to the Spirit's action in the preached word. It is the preached word which creates faith in the mental or spiritual part of the person. The arising of faith in the mind confirms the presence of Christ who through baptism already lives in the nature. This concept that in the congregation the child can be brought to faith is the one reason that Schleiermacher saw for justifying infant baptism.

Admittedly Martensen makes no attempt to describe what happens to the child in baptism. This remains a secret to us. It can only be asserted that the child receives the essence of faith, which is Christ, and Spirit of faith. The Holy Spirit is called here the Spirit of faith, since by virtue of His dwelling in the child through baptism, He becomes the cause of all future faith. By saying that the child receives the essence of faith and the Spirit of faith, Martensen does not mean to assert that the child receives these through infusion. The action of baptism works organically in that the Holy Spirit becomes the "spirit" of the child's soul. This is not a direct indwelling of God in the child, but it is the beginning of a relationship in which God is immanently

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 57.

connected with the child. God does not dwell directly in the child, but He dwells directly alongside of the child. Martensen calls this an immanent relationship.⁶⁸

In the matter of faith in connection with baptism Martensen provides a very adequate discussion. Even though faith has been mentioned already, it will be shown more precisely how faith develops from baptism.

At the time of baptism the child is devoid of faith as a knowledge of and trust in God. The child possesses Christ and the Holy Spirit whom he has received in baptism without the benefit of faith. Through baptism the child has the essence of faith, which is Christ, and the Holy Spirit, who is the cause of the new life in Christ. Even though the child has the essence of faith and the Spirit, he does not in fact have faith. When Martensen refers to the essence of faith, he is referring to the object of faith, which is Christ. So through baptism the child has Christ, who is the object of faith, and the Spirit, who is the cause of faith, but he himself is not engaged in any act of trusting. The Spirit lives in the nature of the child without creating faith and Christ lives in the nature without being believed on. Martensen explains this through an analogy with Jesus. A baptized child's lack of faith is similar to Christ's not being conscious of either His Godhead or Himself. The Lord Christ as an infant had no knowledge, although he carried within Himself all the

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62. Georg Stosch, who follows Martensen, describes what actually happened to the child who was baptized. "Die Taufgnade ist nicht eine ruhende, die erst später bei Einzelnen durch den Glauben in Bewegung gesetzt wird und in Tausenden einen Todesschlaf schläft, weil der Glaube sie nicht erweckt. Vielmehr redet die Taufgnade schon zu der schlummern- den Seele des Kindes, wie nur Gottes Geist zu einer Menschenseele in allen Stadien ihrer Entwicklung zu reden vermag." *Op. cit.*, p. 85. This is a clear example of how those who taught a "naturalistic" working of baptism circumvented the word and faith, the divinely appointed means for appropriating salvation.

treasures of knowledge in the form of a seed which would be productive. Likewise unconsciously the child carries within himself Christ, who is the essence of faith or the object of faith, and the Holy Spirit, who as the Spirit of faith is its cause. To say that the child has faith and of itself enters into a covenant with God is parallel to maintaining that Christ as an infant made use of His knowledge as the incarnate God in a hidden way. To maintain that Christ made use of His knowledge as the incarnate God would be making the childhood of Christ an act of deception. That children do not actually have faith through their baptism is seen in that they are not admitted to holy communion. The communing of children has never received universal acceptance in the church and has been expressly condemned by the Protestant church.⁶⁹

Even though faith is not worked in the child through his baptism, the cause of faith is given to him in baptism. Here the cause of faith is the Holy Spirit who is responsible for the development of faith. Actual faith develops from that which was given in baptism. It is the task of the church to assist in developing (entfalten) faith⁷⁰ in the child from

⁶⁹Martensen, op. cit., pp. 60ff.

⁷⁰The word Entfalten is related to the word Keim. As a seed develops into a flower, so the gift of baptism develops into faith. In this analogy taken from nature to describe the working of baptism on the child, the spoken word is compared to rain. The word like the rain causes the seed given in baptism to develop and bring forth the fruit of faith.

Stosch writes: "Das Wort hat schlummernde Keime und schlummernde Errinerungen geweckt. Wie Licht ist oft das Sterben von Kindern, die in ihrer Taufnade heimgehen. Gesetz und Evangelium ist als Geistessaat in das Herz und Gewissen der Getauften gesät. Die Saat keimt und bringt Frucht durch das Wort Gottes." Op. cit., p. 76.

Similarly Hory says: "Dem Wort fällt die Aufgabe zu, dem aus den Hüllen der geistigen Natur die geistige Persönlichkeit zu entwickeln, diese Aufgabe, die ihm auf andern Gebieten des Lebens zukommt." Op. cit., p. 122.

This process of unfolding or developing the seed given in baptism

that which was given in him in baptism. The first step in the development towards a real faith is historical faith. Historical faith comes into existence from those things which are experienced. It is based on phenomenology. At each step of its development, historical faith must be able to become real faith. Having historical faith is just part of the normal development in obtaining real faith. Historical faith as long as it is in the process of developing is not damning, because it is on the way to perfection. Only when an incomplete faith is permitted to remain in the condition of incompleteness can such a faith be detrimental. It is necessary that actual saving faith be present in historical faith as a potentiality. The faith which develops from the cause of faith given in baptism and through the process of historical faith is defined in its ultimate form as a comforting trust, the heart's laying hold of redemption, and a spiritual hungering and thirsting after the righteousness which finds satisfaction in Christ alone.⁷¹ That infants cannot have a faith is based on their inability to experience phenomenology. Martensen's

was not only the task of the spoken word, but of the Lord's Supper as well. A [ugust] F [riedrich] C [hristian] Vilmar, Dogmatik, edited by K. W. Piderit (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1874), p. 257.

Albrecht Peters describes the relationship of baptism to the Lord's Supper as it was taught by the "naturalistic" theologians. "Ganz analog wird auch bei uns unterschieden zwischen dem äusseren sichtbaren Leib, der das Brot und den Wein empfängt; er ist dem 'natürlichen' Lebensprozess unterworfen, er ist der fortwährenden Selbstauflösung, dem Tode preisgegeben, und dem 'inneren Leibeskeim,' der durch die Taufe in uns hineingepflanzt, durch Christi Leib und Blut zur Auferstehung und zum neuen Leben ernährt wird." Realpräsenz: Luthers Zeugnis von Christi Gegenwart im Abendmahl (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1960), p. 13. Peters gives here a brief description of the "naturalistic" working of the Lord's Supper, as taught in the nineteenth century by Lutheran theologians. Ibid., pp. 12ff.

⁷¹ Martensen, op. cit., pp. 67ff.

attitude towards the creation of faith is similar to the main stream of Lutheran theology in the nineteenth century. That faith could come only when the consciousness dealt with the preached word was an almost universally accepted concept.

Martensen's concept of infant baptism is reflected in his attitude to the baptismal liturgy. He first deals with the questions that are addressed to the child. It is said that the child has no freedom in answering these questions. Martensen cannot account for the presence of questions in the baptismal rite, since they indicate that the child has a freedom of choice in answering "yes" or "no" to them. According to both reason and the Scriptures, the child has no such freedom of choice. If one is interested in maintaining a freedom of choice on the child's part and also in retaining the question and answer form, it would really be better to delay the baptism of the child till that time when a child could really have a freedom of choice. Should the questions and answers be retained in the rite of baptism as indicating that the baptized does have a freedom of choice in answering the questions, then the concept of infant baptism must be given up. In order to avoid what is called a Docetic opinion, that the child actually has freedom of choice in answering the questions addressed to him, Martensen suggests that they should be addressed to the sponsors or that they should be put in a declarative form. If the questions should be addressed to the sponsors or put in the form of a declaration, the child does not thereby become a disinterested object. In the action of baptism the child is a receiving individual and he has the possibility of developing his own personality.⁷² In his attitude to

⁷²Ibid., p. 73.

the liturgy Martensen reflects his understanding of the effects of baptism. That the questions are not to be addressed to the child reflects the denial of infant faith. By substituting an address of the questions to the sponsors or a use of the declarative form which treats the child as an object, Martensen indicates that in baptism the nature of the child passively receives the essence of faith and the Spirit of faith. He condemns the concept that the child is active in making a choice in baptism as Docetic. The term Docetic indicates his Christology in which the infant Christ is not conscious of and cannot make use of His deity. This principle is then carried over to the realm of infant baptism where it is said that the child is not conscious of the Spirit's working in his nature and cannot make personal use of it till the time of reason.

The function of the sponsors is defined as one of desiring for the child that which the child desires for himself. Every human being has a natural relationship to Christ. The child is born into the world in order to give witness to Christ. On this account, the child from his inmost nature desires to develop that faith which the church confesses. Since the child is already born with the desire to confess the Christian faith, the function of the sponsors becomes that of expressing that which the child himself desires.⁷³ Martensen previously spoke of this desire of the child to confess the Christian faith in his discussion of the nature of the child. In the nature of the child there is an inward drive towards the kingdom of God. This drive is the child's desire to confess the Christian faith. The function of the sponsors is connected with this drive or desire, since in the rite of baptism they give expression to

⁷³Ibid.

it for the child.

When the faith whose foundations were established in infant baptism reaches the point of being conscious of itself, then confirmation can be used as a personal ratification of the confession of faith. It also entitles the baptized to participate in the Lord's Supper.⁷⁴ Whether confirmation is given or not does not affect the validity of infant baptism. Because of the divine act in infant baptism, this baptism is a proper and complete one.⁷⁵ Even though Martensen says the baptism is complete regardless of whether confirmation is given or not, he does not say that the act of salvation is complete in the act of baptism alone. As we have seen previously the act of salvation consists of both baptism and the preaching of the word.

Conclusion

With Martensen, as we have previously seen with Höfling, both baptism and the preached word must be applied if complete salvation is to be achieved in the individual. Martensen gives a subsidiary function to the preached word in its relationship to baptism. The preached word has significance only in that it brings persons to baptism and develops that which baptism has given. The preached word works nothing apart from baptism. Baptism plays the more significant role in salvation. It gives the essence of faith and the Holy Spirit to the baptized. Through it the baptized is placed into direct organic connection with Christ. When the word creates faith in the baptized person, nothing essentially new is given.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 74.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 75.

The word in creating faith only makes the baptized person aware of that which he already has. It is for this reason that we say that the preached word has only a subsidiary function in relation to baptism. The preached word develops that which the child already has through baptism.

Martensen's anthropology, like Höfling's divides the person into the natural and the rational parts. Analogous to the superiority of baptism over the preached word is the superiority of the natural part over the rational part. The natural part of man as it is found in a child is in itself capable of receiving the grace of baptism. In the case of adults the natural part is covered over by the rational. The preached word has the function of breaking through the rational part of man, so that the natural part can come to the surface. When the natural part of an adult has been freed from the rational, baptism may be administered. The natural part of a person does not resist grace and within it exists a desire and longing for the kingdom of God and for Christ. It is on this nature that the grace of baptism works. This anthropology is questionable, since it makes one part of man more essential than another part. It resembles Neo-Platonism which asserted the soul to be more essential than the body. With Martensen, the reverse is true. Secondly, this anthropology is based more on the philosophy of Romanticism than on the Scriptures, as we shall later show in our discussion on Rocholl. Since baptism works directly on the nature, the function of the word as the only means through which God brings salvation is denied. In bringing the essence of faith and the Holy Spirit to the child, baptism works directly on the nature of the child without benefit of either word or faith. This might be defined as some type of mysticism in that the person through baptism comes into direct

union with God apart from the word.⁷⁶

Quite unique is Martensen's description of the development of actual faith. For him real faith develops from the cause of faith, which is the Spirit, given in baptism. The intervening step between the cause of faith and real faith is historical faith. This historical faith comes into existence through experience and is said not to be damning as long as it is in the process of growing. Against this concept it must be said that historical faith, whether it is adding facts to itself or not, can never be saving faith. If what Martensen says is true, then every baptized unbeliever who is acquiring more historical facts would not be damned. An historical faith without trust in Christ is the faith of devils and is damning at any level of development. Martensen is correct that the knowledge which is involved in faith comes before trust. When faith arises, it must trust in somebody, namely Christ. Therefore the knowledge of Christ comes before trust in him. However, the priority of knowledge over trust is a logical sequence and not necessarily a temporal one. When a person comes to faith, he first knows about Christ and then believes. However, knowing and trusting do not have to be separated from one another by a period of time. As long as there is just a knowledge of the facts of salvation, there is no faith. Just having historical faith for a long period of time on the way to obtaining saving faith is certainly not God's desire. If there is the ability to know about Christ and His deeds of

⁷⁶Those who taught a "naturalistic" working of baptism seemed to be aware of the accusation that their teachings were considered by some to be magical. In the second edition of his Die christliche Taufe und die baptische Frage, Martensen goes to great lengths to show the reader that his concept is not magical. A magical understanding of baptism would teach that the child would receive something which his nature would be incapable of receiving. A magical concept would also affirm that baptism without the other means of grace could work salvation. (Zweite Auflage; Gotha: Andreas Perthes, 1860), pp. vii. Georg Stosch also claims that the "naturalistic" working of baptism is not magical. Op. cit., pp. 91f.

Whether or not the "naturalistic" understanding of infant baptism

salvation, God demands that the person believe and trust. It is not God's will that a person remain merely in historical faith and thus remain an unbeliever. Many people might be brought to salvation after having undergone a period of having only historical faith. However, God does not require that those infants who are baptized undergo the same process. Just as Martensen was theosophic in his concept of the working of baptism on the soul, so he is an idealist in his concept that faith can only arise when certain outward phenomena are brought into contact with the conscious or rational part of the person.

Gottfried Thomasius

Thomasius' discussion on infant baptism has value because of its clearness and conciseness. The following study is based on his dogmatical work, Christi Person und Werk.

A comparison between the efficacies of baptism and the preached word

Both baptism and the preached word are said to work towards the same goal of salvation, but each does it in a different way. Baptism works on the individual as he is and quite apart from the level of personal development and individual competence. Baptism through its very application places the individual into the fellowship of salvation. The word on the

is to be considered magical depends upon what magic is considered to be. To be sure an unbeliever might brand everything in the realm of the religious as magical. In Lutheran circles the personal imparting of divine grace apart from the word and faith is called magical. If this definition is accepted, then it must be said that the "naturalistic" concept of infant baptism was magical. Baptism had a personal direct efficacy on the child apart from the word and faith.

other hand requires a person who is psychologically mature before it can begin its work. It deals with a person who is conscious of himself. Baptism works on that part of man which is able to receive material (natürlichen) means. The natural side of man to which baptism is directed is that part of man which makes him a member of the human race.⁷⁷ The place where baptism works is further defined as a mysterious realm which still lies beneath the consciousness. In this mysterious realm the psychical and physical (geistleiblichen) forces of life have their origin. This place God has reserved for His own working and here lies the conscience. This is the life that becomes the life with which God deals. That part of the human being that is conscious of itself and is able to will rests upon the foundation of this mysterious realm which exists within the natural part of man. Into this hidden and mysterious realm within man the Spirit of Christ sinks Himself through baptism as the effective cause of the new spiritual life. This spiritual life has within itself the potentiality to overcome gradually the old personality and to bring about the new personality.⁷⁸ Baptism as the planting into Christ gives the baptized person a new incarnate (gottmenschliche) life. The Spirit of the incarnate God makes the baptized person the place of His dwelling and working. Since the Spirit lives in the baptized through baptism, this sacrament is regeneration. Baptism is not regeneration in the sense that

⁷⁷ Cottfried Thomasius, Christi Person und Werk (Zweite Auflage; Erlangen: Blasings, 1863), III, 2, pp. 1f.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 5f.

it creates a new consciousness or changes the attitude of the will.⁷⁹

The regeneration of the conscious and willing part of man is accomplished through the word, which is directed to the person who is already conscious of himself. On the other hand, baptism works regeneration which affects the natural or material side of man.⁸⁰ Thus regeneration worked by baptism does not involve the consciousness or the will, but only the natural part of man to which the Spirit comes to live through baptism. This division of regeneration into two parts according to the natural and the rational parts of man is identical with that of Hülfling. For both men full regeneration in both the natural and rational parts of a person is brought about only after both baptism and the preached word have been applied.

Baptism creates in the individual a new life,⁸¹ but faith must arise in the individual if there is going to be a personal appropriation of salvation. This sacrament is the beginning of the new life and the creation of the new man. Still if there is going to be any personal appropriation of the gifts found in baptism, the preached word must be added since this alone creates faith. It depends on the faith which is worked by the word whether or not the relationship into which the individual is placed by baptism becomes a personal and lasting possession for salvation. On this faith depends whether or not the forgiveness of sins offered in baptism will become justification to the consciousness of the individual

⁷⁹Thomasius has given a definition of regeneration which does not include faith. On this account he can ascribe regeneration to children, even though they are still incapable of believing. Oettingen also claimed that children were really and effectively regenerated in baptism. However, he quite explicitly states that they are neither repentant nor converted. *Op. cit.*, pp. 417f.

⁸⁰Thomasius, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, p. 6.

and whether or not the seed of the divine life will develop with any result. Baptism is responsible for placing the individual into the saving relationship with Christ, but the word which creates faith is responsible for the appropriation of the gifts of salvation which baptism gives. What baptism gives becomes personal only where there is faith. Faith is the fulfillment of obligation which baptism gives as a covenant. Thus the working of salvation by baptism is conditioned by faith.⁸²

Infant Baptism

We now move more specifically into Thomasius' discussion of infant baptism. Even though Thomasius does not give much space to an exegetical study of infant baptism, he nevertheless finds it to be in keeping with the intentions of Scripture. To be sure there is no express command from God concerning infant baptism and there exists no indisputable example that can be used to demonstrate that it was an apostolic practice. Nevertheless those passages in Acts which mention the baptizing of entire families say as much for it as they do against it. That the apostles baptized entire households, even though perhaps only the head of the household believed, indicates that the home should become a place of cultivation for Christian fellowship. In these same passages lies the unmistakable intention that as soon as the church attained a firm foothold in this world baptism should become infant baptism. Mark 10:13-16 and Matthew 19:13-15, where Jesus promises the kingdom of heaven to children, are also passages that may be used to support infant baptism. Here the Lord not only

⁸²

Ibid., p. 8f.

promises the kingdom to children, but instructs the church to receive them. Since baptism is the means ordained by Christ Himself for entering into the kingdom, children should be baptized.⁸³

Thomasius also establishes infant baptism from the children's need of the sacrament and their ability to receive it. The child's need of baptism and his capability to receive it gives the church not only the right to baptize infants, but also the duty. Their need for baptism comes from their natural sinfulness, which has included them under the common guilt of humanity and under the wrath of God. Undoubtedly this is a reference to original sin, even though Thomasius does not use the term here. The children's capability to receive baptism is based on the objective power of baptism and on the way in which baptism works. This objective working of baptism as we have seen above is the giving of the Spirit to the natural part of man irrespective of either the will or consciousness. Since the child is part of the human race, he also may be an object of this action. Because the child receives the Spirit in baptism, he may be considered regenerate according to his nature. The capability of children to receive baptism can be derived also from what this sacrament requires of those who are going to receive it. According to definition baptism as the sacrament of initiation requires no other condition for its being received than the common ability of all men to be saved. This ability is an inherent part of the natural side of man. The child as part of the human race also has this ability. However, in the child where the personal will has not awakened this ability has a

⁸³Ibid., p. 149

purely passive character (capacitas passiva).⁸⁴

Thomasius presents a very concise description of what baptism immediately effects in the child. Through baptism the Spirit works in the child, even though faith is not created through the Spirit's activity. Baptism neither works nor is able to work a conscious attitude in the child. What baptism works is not what we commonly call faith. Through baptism the Spirit of Christ mysteriously sways in those depths of the child where his natural life and personal life are connected in a direct unity. By means of the Spirit's action, which has been brought about by baptism, God grips the core of life which is characteristic of the creatures and changes the direction of this life. Thomasius believes that process is better called an unlocking of the self for the working of the Spirit, than faith. In adults this same working of grace has the form of faith. However, in children this working of the Spirit cannot be called faith, because the divine substance given to the child is an action of God and not of the child. What happens to children in baptism may best be described as an inner condition of the human spirit's being opened for the working of divine grace. This condition is analogous to the child's life being opened to his mother's love. The child's receptivity for the mother's love exists long before his conscious life as an adult.⁸⁵ As has been shown, Thomasius has refrained in quite explicit terms from designating as faith what the Spirit has worked in the child.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 143. What Thomasius calls the capacitas passiva corresponds to Frank's aptitudo passiva and what Martensen called obicem non ponere. This passive quality exists in the natural side of man. This natural side exists in children to the exclusion of the rational part, which first begins to develop with the process of reasoning.

⁸⁵Ibid., pp. 144f.

We shall now discuss his attitude towards the creation of faith and why children cannot have faith. According to the terminology of the Scriptures, faith is a conscious attitude. Belonging to the essence of faith is a personal trust which presupposes an act of contrition. Since children are not conscious and are not capable of trust or contrition, it is not possible for them to have faith. For Thomasius faith is always caused by the preached word. The word is always transmitted to the mind through hearing. To support this, Romans 10:17 is mentioned. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the word of God." This hearing, according to Thomasius, is to be understood as a conscious reception of the word of God. Since children are not capable of consciously hearing the word of God when they are baptized, they do not receive faith. What the Holy Spirit works in the nature of the child may not be called faith.⁸⁶

Conversion and the baptized person

Before faith can arise in a person, he must have a knowledge of his total sinfulness and a sincere desire to be saved. Both the knowledge of sinfulness and the desire to be saved rest upon the recognition of the essence of sin. Without these faith cannot come into existence. Only in bitter experience can a person separate himself from sin and turn to the grace of God. This personal putting away of the old natural direction of

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 155. Vilmar who like Thomasius teaches that baptism works in the mysterious parts of the hidden life of the child asserts that children have faith. He makes the bold statement "so müssen wir eine fides infantium behaupten." Such a situation is indicative of the confusion that can arise in this matter. Even though both men taught the same concerning the efficacy of baptism on children, the one denied infant faith and the other affirmed it. The method of Thomasius is to be preferred, since it does consider faith to be a trust in Christ. Faith as defined by Vilmar is considered to be only reception. Op. cit., pp. 243f.

the mind is known as repentance. The positive side of this repentance is the personal gripping of salvation. Together repentance and faith comprise conversion. To receive baptism one must first undergo this conversion.

For the child who has been baptized in the church, this process of coming to faith still remains in the future. Through conversion the person who has previously received baptism separates himself from sin and makes the gifts given in baptism a personal possession. Even though baptism has taken up the person into the grace-filled covenant of reconciliation and has put him under the working of the Holy Spirit, the baptized person is still afflicted with the sinfulness of his nature. This sinfulness infects his entire being and makes him damnable before God.⁸⁷ The baptized person must through repentance separate himself from his sinful nature and through faith personally lay hold of Christ.

Where the baptized person is not converted, there arises a contradiction between the grace of baptism and what he should become through his baptism. Lack of conversion also causes a contradiction between the relationship established by God in baptism and the direction of the personality. If this contradiction is permitted to remain, then the blessing of baptism is taken away. The grace which the baptized person receives in baptism becomes a lasting possession of salvation, only when the person affirms this grace, keeps it, and lets it become effective in himself. This can only happen when the person has reached the age of self-decision.⁸⁸

⁸⁷Thomasius, op. cit., pp. 145f.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 146.

When Thomasius speaks about the contradiction between what a person is by nature and what he is in his personality, it must be remembered that baptism works regeneration in the nature. Thus an unbelieving person who has been baptized as a child is regenerate according to his nature and unregenerate according to his personality. The contradiction which arises in such a person is that he is regenerate and unregenerate at the same time.

Baptism also has an efficacy in the more mature life of the child. Baptizing an infant makes him a better object for the working of the preached word when he reaches a more mature age. When the word encounters an individual who has been baptized, it does not find an individual who is completely dead in regard to spiritual things. In a baptized person, the word meets an individual who is already regenerate and in whose most inward parts the Spirit of Christ is dwelling. The preached word finds a point of contact in the baptized person which is lacking in the unbaptized.⁸⁹ The baptized person has already encountered salvation. Thus the

⁸⁹Ibid. Stosch gives a description of how the baptized child responds to the spoken word of God. "Ein getauftes Kind beginnt, dem Worte Glauben zu schenken, durch ein inwendiges Licht erleuchtet. Der Anfang und die zweifelfreie Art seines Glaubens weist zurück auf einen früheren, durch Gottes verborgene Wirkung geschaffenen Anfang des Glaubens. Der Herr, an den sie glauben, ist ihnen nicht erst durch das Wort bekannt geworden. Das Wort hat schlummernde Keime und schlummernde Erinnerungen geweckt." *Op. cit.*, p. 76.

This indicates that a relationship between God and the child exists through baptism apart from faith and the word. The word comes first in its spoken form. Stosch also maintains that conversions are deeper in the baptized than in the unbaptized. "Erweckungen und Bekehrungen werden tiefer und wahrer, sie werden dem Evangelium gemäßer sein, wenn sie auf dem Grunde der Taufe geschehen, als wenn sie nur den luftigeren Grund bloßer Eindrücke unter sich haben." *Ibid.*, p. 80.

It might be true that to reinstate in church membership those who were baptized as children is easier than to convert those who have never been baptized. However, Stosch's opinion is quite objectionable to Lutheran theology when it is remembered that according to him children are not really converted in baptism. If children are converted in their baptism, then they can be returned to this faith. To teach that grace works personally apart from faith is un-Lutheran.

Ernst Hory expresses the same thought in an even coarser fashion

preached word does not bring salvation for the first time to a baptized person. The function of the preached word is to confirm the salvation which already exists and to take the power which was given by God through baptism from the nature of the child into the will of the child. It should be noted that the preached word has a function which is subsidiary to baptism. The preached word transfers to the will of the child what baptism has given to its nature. In itself it brings no new salvation.⁹⁰

Conclusion

As Höffling spoke of two aspects of regeneration, Thomasius speaks of two regenerations. The difficulty of dividing baptism and the preached word in such a way that one works regeneration in one area of man and the other in another area comes to the fore in Thomasius' discussion of infant baptism. This difficulty shows itself in that one person can be both regenerate and unregenerate at the same time. Against this concept it must be said that the Scriptures do not know of the phenomenon of one person being both regenerate and unregenerate. Such questions could be raised as: Are these persons saved? How long do they remain in this condition, before the grace of baptism is taken away from them? Such a

when he speaks of Christianizing the people through baptism. "Die Taufe, und zwar als Kindertaufe, ist es in erster Linie, die das Völkerleben zu einem Boden der göttlichen Gnade weiht, die diesen Boden noch ganz unabhängig von der Entscheidung des Einzelnen das an sich wendende Wort mit den Säften und Kräften dieser Gnade tränkt; sie in erster Linie schafft sozusagen eine christliche Atmosphäre, die auch der persönlich noch nicht für das Christentum Entschiedene noch mitgenießen darf. So gewinnt das *μακροχρονία πάλιν τὸ εἶδον* eine ungemein weitreichende Bedeutung. Das Völkerleben wird hiedurch zunächst christianisiert und mit Thau der in Christo erschienenen göttlichen Gnade befruchtet." Op. cit., p. 130.

Now it might be true that baptism might create a Christian atmosphere; however, this atmosphere would certainly never be apart from the personal life of faith.

⁹⁰Thomasius, op. cit., p. 147.

condition might resolve the difficulty of trying to satisfy two opposing concepts, that baptism is the working of grace and that children cannot have faith. But the solution of two regenerations with the possibility of having one person both regenerate and unregenerate is unknown to the Scriptures.

Even if one does not agree with what Thomasius says about the mysterious working of the Spirit in the natural part of man, it must be said that he has made the entire concept clear by refusing to use the word faith to designate this process. Höfling said that faith could be used to designate what the Spirit did and Martensen said that in baptism the child received the essence of faith. Thomasius makes it quite clear that what the Spirit does in baptism is not faith, since faith is an action of man and not of God.

Quite prominent in Thomasius' thought is the "naturalistic" operation of baptism on the nature of the child. Faith has been degraded in the entire scheme of salvation, since the real gifts of salvation are given through the theosophic action of baptism and not through faith. He has defined faith correctly as the personal laying hold of Christ; however faith is an action subsequent to salvation. It is not the human means through which salvation is appropriated. Faith might be defined as response of the mind to the salvation which already exists in the nature of the child through baptism. Salvation is given directly to the nature of the child through baptism quite apart from faith. Wherever a theosophic working of baptism is taught, the role of faith is minimized. Salvation is no longer through faith alone.

We notice that Thomasius is as much an idealist in the matter of faith as were Höfling and Martensen. Faith for him can only be worked when the conscious mind comes in contact with the preached word.

Supplement

In the writings of Hbiling, Martensen, and Thomasius, the "naturalistic" concept of baptism is quite clear. It is not necessary to include entire discussions of other theologians who held similar positions, since the theologians discussed are representative of this particular view of baptism. There are particular concepts, however, which receive a clearer presentation in the writings of other theologians. In this connection four other men have been chosen whose discussions on four different concepts would aid in the general understanding of the "naturalistic" operation of infant baptism.

Carl Gustav Gerhard von Zeszschwitz is included to explain more fully the anthropology basic to an understanding of the "naturalistic" concept. Ernst Hory shows how the "naturalistic" operation of baptism is very intimately connected with a particular theory of kenosis popularized by Thomasius. Rudolph Rocholl specifically mentions those philosophers whose concepts were instrumental in the formulation of this anthropology which divided the human being into natural and rational parts. Franz Delitzsch indicates how closely this concept of baptism approached that of the Roman Catholic Church.

Carl Gustav Gerhard von Zeszschwitz

Zeszschwitz' views on baptism are included because they show baptism and the preached word as the two means of bringing about complete salvation working on the two different parts of man. Baptism is directed to the unconscious part and the word to the conscious part.

The life of each individual is divided into two parts, the spiritual natural part (geistiger Naturgrund) and the conscious part called the "I" (ich). These two parts which make up the individual cannot be identified with one another. Nevertheless, the "I" or conscious part is dependent on and governed by the natural or unconscious part. The "I" stands in the position of a satellite over against the natural part of man. The tension between the two parts is most clearly seen in the area of religion. A man's mind belongs to his "I" and works arbitrarily. Quite independent from the mind, but existing alongside of it, is the conscience. As the mind belongs to the "I" so the conscience belongs to the natural part of man. It is the vestige of nature's relationship to God. The conscience lives within man and cannot be separated from him. It is called the natural side of the spiritual life. It is the *Καεσεία* which receives psychological impressions.⁹¹

To each of the parts of man comes the word in two different forms. To the conscious rational part of man, the "I," the word comes as the word of revelation. In order to be effective the word of revelation needs a rational individual as an object. The conscious rational part of man and the word of revelation work together. The relationship between this word and the "I" is the "I-You" relationship. Working in baptism is another type of word. In baptism is found the word of action and the word of the Creator. It is through this creating word that the Holy Spirit works on the unconscious life of the spirit of man (unbewusstes Geistesleben). This is a reference to what up to now has been

⁹¹Karl Adolf Gerhard von Zezschwitz, System der christlichen kirchlichen Katechetik (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1863), I, 250.

called the natural part of man. Thus two different forms of the word are directed to two different parts of the individual. The rational part receives the word of revelation and the unconscious part receives the word of creation.⁹²

On each of the parts of man each form of the word performs a distinct function. Through baptism the Spirit of God touches the spiritual life of man which is contained within his nature. Baptism establishes a relationship between the nature of man and God. Thus baptism is effective on the natural part of man in which is contained his spiritual life. On the other hand the word is directed to the conscious part of man and appeals to his freedom. While baptism creates a new relationship (Verhältnisz), the word creates a new attitude (Verhalten) in the person.⁹³

Zeischwitz calls what is worked in the unconscious part of the individual "faith." He is able to call this faith, since for him the conscious appropriation of justification is accidental to the essence of faith. For him the actual essence of faith consists in the human nature's instinctive grasping of that which the Holy Spirit works in baptism.⁹⁴

Evident in Zeischwitz's anthropology is the superiority of the unconscious part of man over the rational and conscious part. The conscious part acts arbitrarily and independently. The unconscious part has a closer relationship to God, since it possesses the conscience which is

⁹² Ibid., p. 251.

⁹³ Ibid., p. 254.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 255.

the remnant of the nature's connection with God. The superiority of the unconscious, or natural life in matters of salvation is indicated in that it is called the "geistiger Naturgrund, Menschengeist," and "Geistesleben." The unconscious life has the spiritual or supernatural qualities. The rational part of life is called the "bewusstes Ichleben." This anthropology resembles Neo-Platonism in that one part of man is said to be holier than another. It should be noted that when Zezschwitz uses the term "Geist," he means spiritual in the sense that it is close to God.

Ernst Hory

In 1872 Ernst Hory wrote a monograph on infant baptism entitled Die Taufe als Kindertaufe auf Grund heiliger Schrift. Hory's work reflects well the opinions of those theologians who taught a "naturalistic" efficacy of infant baptism. The one aspect of Hory's views that shall be considered is his understanding of the effects of infant baptism in the light of the incarnation. Martensen recognized the same connection between the incarnation and infant baptism, but Hory's discussion of the matter is more detailed.

Hory claims that the fellowship that God has with Christ is reflected in the fellowship that Christ has with man. Christ stands between God and man. Christ's relationship to believers is fashioned after His relationship to the Father. Working from the principle that Christ's relationship to men is similar to His relationship to the Father, Hory attempts to show that there existed a Naturgemeinschaft between the Father and Christ. Naturgemeinschaft is a fellowship which involves the nature of an individual and not his conscious personality. The personal or conscious fellowship develops out of the natural fellowship.⁹⁵ Christ's

⁹⁵Hory, op. cit., p. 104.

relationship with the Father is the norm of the relationship between God and man. The incarnation of Christ is to be understood as being analogous to the union of a body and soul in a man. The soul exists before it gives evidence in activity that it does exist. This is similar to the union of the divine and human in Christ. Before Christ was conscious of His union with God, He already possessed this union with God. Hory says that it is not foolish to say that a person can have fellowship with God and still not be conscious of it. It is no more foolish than saying a person has a soul and is not conscious of it. Just as it is possible for one to live physically and not be aware of it, so one can be a child of God and not be aware of it.⁹⁶

After Hory has stated his presupposition that there exists an unconscious relationship between the Father and Christ, he explains the union of the divine and human natures in Christ. The union between the divine and human takes place in that area of the personality which has not yet awakened or is just beginning to awaken to consciousness. Christ was conscious of His Godhead only to that degree in which His personality developed out of the natural area into the ethical area.⁹⁷ Hory applies the principles derived from the unconscious relationship of Christ with the Father to the corresponding age of children. What was valid for Christ as a child is also valid for children. Just as God was in communion with Christ when His personality was still in the areas of the unconscious and of the awakening to consciousness, so God can have fellowship with human beings at the same levels of development. Similarly in infant baptism the child can receive the Holy Spirit who then dwells in

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 110.

⁹⁷Ibid., pp. 111f.

the child without the child's being aware of it. In fact in infant baptism there is a mysterious incarnation of Christ based on the historical incarnation. The kenosis of the mysterious indwelling of Christ in the heart of the child conforms to the historical kenosis of Christ.⁹⁸

The natural relationship which the child has with God through baptism is without faith. A personal relationship to the preached word is not and cannot be present within the child. But the child does have a relationship to the personal Word Who is Christ and to His kingdom. Even though faith is not present in the child, baptism is not prevented from working there. Where faith is not present, baptism condescends and works at that level where there is receptivity for it. Through baptism as through a canal the kingdom of God is made to flow into the child's life. In the life of a child the kingdom of God satisfies itself by working on the natural side of the child in which the personality of the child is still hidden. Throughout the entire development of the child, the grace of God subjects itself to the laws and rules of the organism in which it is working. This condescending of the grace of God in a child is like the condescending of the personal grace of God, Jesus Christ, Who subjected Himself to the incarnation.⁹⁹

Underlying Hory's discussion of what infant baptism effects in the child is the presupposition that Christ's relation to God is the norm for Christ's relationship with men. Hory first explains Christ's relationship to God in the incarnation. He then applies these conclusions

⁹⁸ Ibid., pp. 116f.

⁹⁹ Ibid., pp. 119f.

to Christ's relationship with children in baptism. One questions whether the greater mystery of the incarnation can be used to explain the lesser mystery of Christ's working in the child through baptism. Next to the mystery of the Trinity, the greatest of all mysteries is the incarnation of the Son of God. It can be known what happened in the incarnation, but it cannot be known how it happened. Christians are called on to believe that God became man, and not to explain it. God's working in children through baptism is also a mystery to us. But of these two mysteries, the incarnation is the greater. Since the incarnation is a greater mystery, it is the more unknown. Thus in explaining the working of infant baptism in the light of the incarnation, Hory is explaining the less unknown in the light of the more unknown. Doctrines about which we know little cannot be explained in the light of doctrines about which we know even less.

Hory's Christology or incarnation theology is in turn a reflection of his anthropology. The relationship between the Father and Christ is described as a Naturgemeinschaft. From this Naturgemeinschaft Christ's personal relationship to the Father grows. This concept is based on that particular anthropology which asserts that the nature is the basic part of the human being and that out of the nature the conscious "I" comes forth. This anthropology is more philosophical than Biblical. Thus Hory explains the incarnation on the basis of a philosophically oriented anthropology.

Hory's explanation of the incarnation is unsatisfactory since it explains the mystery away. The mystery of the incarnation is that the eternal God has taken on flesh and has become an infant. This infant is no less God than before His incarnation. The mystery is also seen in

the fact that the eternal God who knows all things must learn all things. To say that Christ did not know that He was God explains the mystery away. The omniscience of the Christ child is analogous to His omnipresence. He who is confined to the crib is He who sits with Father and the Spirit and fills all things. Thus Christ who knows all things must also learn. That Christ did not know that He was God and had to grow into this knowledge denies to some extent that the infant in Bethlehem is the eternal God.

Hory has concluded that just as Christ did not know He was God so children do not know about their relationship to Christ. However, if one accepts a Christology where to Christ are ascribed all the attributes of God, one could come up with the exact opposite concept. It can be said with certainty that just as Christ knew the Father as an infant, so children through baptism know and trust in Christ.

The one conclusion of our discussion which should be valid for everyone is that what a person believes about the incarnation can be very closely connected with what he believes about the Spirit's working through baptism on the child. In the case of Hory, his incarnation theology, which determines his theology of infant baptism, is based on an anthropology philosophically oriented.

Rudolph Rocholl

Also belonging to those theologians who taught a "naturalistic" operation of baptism on the nature of the child was Rudolph Rocholl. His contribution to the discussion of infant baptism was a four page article in Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, 1902, entitled "Vom Kinderglauben." Although this article is not extensive, it is very important, because in it Rocholl attempts to set forth philosophical evidence in support of this

particular anthropology which divided the human being into unconscious or natural and conscious or rational parts. This anthropology is basic to the understanding of baptism for all those who taught a "naturalistic" efficacy of baptism, since this sacrament was said to work on the nature of the child and the preached word was said to work on the reason of the more mature person. Significant in Rocholl's short article is that there was a realization that this particular anthropology was philosophically oriented.

Rocholl's purpose in "Vom Kinderglauben" is to show that infant faith is tenable if it can be established that there exists within the human being an unconscious part where this faith can exist. He maintains that the inner spiritual man is not located in the powers of reasoning and reflection, but rather in the nature of man. To support this position he mentions the philosophers Descartes, Schelling, and Fichte. Descartes is said to have asserted that the child was already conscious in the womb of his mother. Rocholl says that by claiming that the child was conscious in the womb of his mother Descartes means that the child already had a personality. This personality does not have the powers of reflection and indeed it may never awaken to consciousness. An awakened consciousness is only half of the entire personality. Also called upon to support the dichotomy of a man into conscious and unconscious parts is the philosopher of Romanticism, Schelling. This philosopher claimed that the holiest part of a human life was too often destroyed through the powers of reflection. The holiest part of man is called the "identity" or the unconsciousness and it is located in what is called the depths of man.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰"Vom Kinderglauben," Neue Kirchliche Zeitschrift, XIII (1902), 672f. The influence of Schelling on those who taught the sacraments worked "naturalistically" is recognized by many. Albrecht Peters says the following about the origins of this concept. "Diese in sich geschlossene Schau hat kaum noch Luther zum Vater, sie geht über Schelling und

Rocholl claims that a sound psychology requires consideration of both the conscious and unconscious parts of the individual. Without the unconscious part, the conscious part would disintegrate into a multitude of functions performed by the body. If it were not for the unconscious part, the acts of the mind would become acts of the body.¹⁰¹

Rocholl says that if the concept of an unconscious region existing beneath the conscious one is accepted, then the difficulty is removed in accepting the concept that baptism works "faith" in infants. The term "faith" in this connection means the same as it does with Hüfling. It is the indwelling of Christ in the nature or the unconscious part of the child.¹⁰²

Rocholl's article calls attention to the fact that the particular anthropology which divided the man into conscious and unconscious parts is a concept found previously in certain philosophers. Such a concept indicates that this is a philosophically oriented anthropology rather than a strictly Biblical one.

Franz Delitzsch

The last theologian discussed in this chapter is Franz Delitzsch. In connection with Hüfling, Martensen, and Thomasius, it was mentioned frequently that baptism gave the actual gift of grace to the person receiving this sacrament. The preached word on the other hand only offered

Steffens, Oetinger und Böhme zurück auf Parazelsus." Op. cit., p. 16.

¹⁰¹Rocholl, op. cit., p. 673.

¹⁰²Ibid., p. 674. It can be noted here that after leaving the Unionkirche and the lutherische Landeskirche, Rocholl joined with the Evangelisch--Lutherische Kirche Altpreußens. Cf. Hübner, op. cit., p. 1131. This church is now in communion with the Missouri Synod. Vilmar,

and declared that God was gracious. While the preached word worked only on those who had a mature reason, baptism worked on all those who received it regardless of their level of mental development. Baptism was said to have an objective efficacy. This means that baptism works salvation on the person who receives it regardless of his attitude. It also means that baptism works on believers as well as unbelievers. Such a doctrine of baptism seems to approach the Roman Catholic attitude which teaches a working of baptism apart from faith. Franz Delitzsch's attitude to baptism shows how closely the "naturalistic" concept resembles the ex opere operato concept of the Roman Catholic Church.

Delitzsch's discussion of baptism is found in his Vier Bücher von der Kirche. He does not specifically deal with infant baptism, but his understanding of the operation of baptism is similar to the others whom we have discussed in this chapter. To explain the distinct efficacy of baptism, Delitzsch first compares it to the preached word. He finds that there are three differences between the preached word and baptism. The first difference is that when Christ is offered in the word, He must be received by faith; but, when He is offered in baptism, He is received by all those who are baptized. The second difference is the way in which each offers salvation. When the preached word offers salvation, it may be refused. On the other hand the person who is baptized receives all the gifts of baptism whether he believes or not. If the gifts of baptism are received in unbelief, they redound to the recipient's damnation.

who also held to a "naturalistic" working of baptism, is considered to be one of the spiritual fathers of the Selbstständige Ev.--Luth. Kirche. This church is also now in communion with the Missouri Synod. Cf. Heinrich Martin, "Die Selbstständige Ev. Luth. Kirche," Evang.-Lutherische Freikirche in Deutschland, edited by Ulrich Kunz (Frankfurt am Main: Lutheraner Verlag, 1953), p. 23.

The third difference is between the effects of each on the individual personally. Where the preached word has been refused, there is no change in the individual. The salvation which the preached word brings remains as far from him after he hears the word as it was before he heard the word. When the preached word is not received in faith, it becomes evidence against him that accuses him. However, with every person who is baptized, God establishes the relationship of the new covenant. God enters a covenant through baptism and the individual enters when he gives heed to the blood of the covenant through faith. In all three of these differences between the preached word and baptism, we notice that baptism is efficacious in the individual whether he believes or not. This is particularly evident in that all who are baptized receive Christ. For Delitzsch the operation of baptism may be described as ex opere operato. By the term ex opere operato he does not mean that baptism works salvation in every instance; but it does mean that it leaves an indelible mark on all those who receive it. Everyone who is baptized receives Christ irrespective of faith. It is also said that everyone who has been baptized has been caught up in the net of God's love. Being caught in the net of God's love is a situation which God has created and which no man can change. The objective efficacy of baptism is also seen in that it is said all baptized persons have been planted into the death of Christ.¹⁰³

The ex opere operato efficacy of baptism is seen also in the way Delitzsch defines the body of Christ. The members of the body of Christ are said to be those who have been baptized and who participate in the

¹⁰³ Vier Bücher von der Kirche (Dresden: Justus Naumann, 1847), pp. 30ff.

Lord's Supper. The quantitative size of the body of Christ can be known since it is defined as the collective number of those who have been baptized into the body and who drink of the same Spirit. Membership in the body of Christ is determined not by faith, but by baptism. A baptized unbeliever is as much a part of the body of Christ as is a baptized believer. To demonstrate the point, Delitzsch says that both Hengstenberg and Wislicenus are members of the body of Christ. In proving his point that belief does not determine membership in the body of Christ, Delitzsch has chosen two very impressive examples. Hengstenberg was a leading theologian in the restoration of the Confessional Lutheran theology in Germany in the nineteenth century. Wislicenus was an apostasized and unfrocked pastor. Delitzsch goes on to say that by virtue of their baptism, Protestants, Roman Catholics, Socinians, and Unitarians are all members of the body of Christ. Thus the body of Christ expands itself through the administration of baptism. Everyone who has been baptized has been placed into a new relationship with Christ and becomes a possession of Christ. Unless the baptized person commits the unforgivable sin, he remains till the time of his death under the power of the Holy Spirit. The baptized person remains under the power of the Holy Spirit, because through baptism the person is made a member of the body of Christ. Since the Holy Spirit is active in the body of Christ, He is actively working on every baptized person. The same Spirit nourishes, purifies, and rejuvenates the life of the body of Christ through the means of grace.¹⁰⁴

Delitzsch's discussion of baptism indicates quite clearly how the reception of baptism has taken the place of having faith as the most consequential element in the matter of individual salvation. According

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 41.

to Delitzsch, faith does not determine membership in the body of Christ, but baptism does. Since baptism makes its recipients members of the body of Christ regardless of their personal disposition, Delitzsch can claim that baptized Socinians and Unitarians are members of the body. Here is one basic error common to all those who taught a "naturalistic" efficacy of baptism. The error is the failure to distinguish between the inherent efficacy of the baptism and its personal blessing. Baptism is continually efficacious in that it continually offers salvation, but it does not produce personal salvation in some persons because of unbelief. As long as baptism exists apart from faith there are no personal enjoyments of the benefits of baptism. Delitzsch is in error in teaching that the recipient of baptism enjoys any of its blessings apart from faith.

Conclusion

A summary and a critique of infant baptism as held by the Erlangen theologians should take into consideration the particular anthropology involved, the relationship of baptism to the spoken word, and the matter of infant faith.

Anthropology

As was mentioned above, the anthropology involved in this particular understanding of infant baptism was taken over from the philosophy of Romanticism. Man was considered to be a "natural" creature consisting of matter. As the individual person would mature, his nature would reflect upon itself and thus the mind or mental part of a human being would come into existence. Since the natural part existed before the mental part, this natural part was basic to the essence of a man. The mental or spiritual part was not basic. In fact a human being could exist without it.

This was the case with children who lack consciousness and reason.

Even though this particular anthropology speaks of natural and mental parts in a human being, man even in his maturity really only has a natural part. The mental part, which is also identified as consciousness or the spiritual personality, consists of the accumulated conscious experiences of the awakened nature. It is a product of the nature. It can also be described as a function of the nature.

Even in their theology the Lutheran theologians influenced by the philosophy of Romanticism exalted the natural part of man over his mental part. God had reserved the nature for his own particular saving activities. Even after the fall, nature had a close contact with God. The mental part or the mind was distant from God and was a hindrance to the working of grace. The superiority of the nature over the mind is evident in their understanding of regeneration. Children, who consist only of nature, are acceptable to God for regeneration through baptism, since they have not used their reason. Adults must push aside their reason, so that God through baptism can work regeneration directly on their natures. It is no wonder that these theologians said that every baptism must be infant baptism, a baptism working directly on the nature. When these men spoke about reason being a hindrance to regeneration, they intended to say something different from Luther who had said the same thing. Luther never denied that children have a spiritual nature or soul. For Luther reason was not the soul per se, but it was the activity of the mind of man which fought against the truth of God's word. Luther also never taught that the mental or spiritual part of man was a product of his material nature. What Luther intended by reason's being a hindrance to faith was quite different from what these theologians intended.

This anthropology adopted from the philosophy of Romanticism is open to criticism. Since this anthropology is definitely philosophically oriented and not Biblical, it is immediately questionable. It seems to teach that man consists of two independent parts. This is definitely seen in the matter of regeneration. A man who believes the word but is not baptized is said to be regenerate according to his mental part, but not according to his natural part. The Scriptures do speak of the struggle between the old man and the new man in Christ, but this is a struggle which takes place within one person. Conversion takes place in the whole man and not just in one part. The anthropology of Romanticism is just a reversal of Neo-Platonism. Where for Neo-Platonism the soul was confined by the body, so in Romanticism as found in Erlangen theology the body or the nature was hindered by the soul or mental part of man. In both philosophies one part of man stood in closer relationship to God than the other. For Neo-Platonism it was the soul and for Romanticism it was the nature.

A second criticism can be made against this anthropology merely because it is philosophically oriented. Philosophy can never be final and absolute. Therefore the conclusions based on philosophy can never be absolutely certain. Should this philosophy ever be questioned or superseded by another philosophy, the anthropology based upon it would fall into immediate disrepute.

A third criticism against this anthropology is that by its use in the doctrine of infant baptism, philosophy has been given precedence over Biblical doctrines. In the doctrine of the means of grace as taught by the Erlangen theologians, philosophical anthropology serves as the basis. Baptism is the means of grace for the nature of man or the whole man and the word informs the mind of man that grace is available. If it were shown

that this anthropology is in error and man's spiritual nature is more than just a product of nature, then the entire doctrine of the means of grace would have to be redefined. Certainly Christian doctrine must have a more reliable foundation than philosophy which is constantly subject to change.

Last of all, this anthropology must be criticized for its un-Biblical dichotomy. For the Scriptures man consists of body and soul. A third part, the mind, may even be suggested. However, the dichotomy of Romanticism is not Biblical. It makes the spiritual part of man a product of his nature.

The relationship of baptism to the spoken word

A second important element in this concept of baptism was the relationship of this sacrament to the word. The Erlangen theologians unlike Luther did not teach that the gifts of word and the sacraments were the same.¹⁰⁵ Baptism actually brought grace to the individual. Whoever was baptized had Christ and the Spirit within his nature. The nature of the baptized person was brought into a direct relationship with God. The preached word offered salvation to the individual, but did not actually convey it to his person so that he could claim it as his own. This does not mean that the word was entirely without effect. It did cause knowledge of salvation to spring up in the mind; however such knowledge did not save unless baptism had been administered. The difference between baptism and the word was not one of form, but of essence. Baptism contained an

¹⁰⁵ The theologians who taught that baptism had a different efficacy from the word also taught that the Lord's Supper had different effects. Just as baptism brought the person's nature into direct contact with God, so the Lord's Supper was direct union with God. How different this was from Luther's doctrine which taught that the gift or proprium of the Sacrament of the Altar was that of the word also, der totus vivus Christus in seiner gottmenschlichen Person. Peters, op. cit., p. 134.

absolute efficacy within its essence in so far as everyone who was baptized received certain gifts within his nature. The word brought no such gifts. It was only information about the gifts.

With this understanding of the means of grace, both baptism and the word were made impotent in certain areas. Even though baptism brought Christ to the individual, it could not work the knowledge which is necessarily involved in faith. Therefore baptism worked a regeneration without faith. Regeneration without faith is no regeneration. The preached word was in reality not even considered a means of grace, since in reality it did not convey any grace to anyone. There were cases though where baptism alone was considered to be complete in itself. Baptism was considered sufficient for children as long as they remained children. However, in no cases was the spoken word considered sufficient. The believing adult without baptism still lacked full regeneration.

By degrading the position of the preached word in relation to baptism, the position of faith was also lowered. Baptism was the decisive factor for membership in Christ's body and for possession of the Spirit. Baptism and not faith determined who would possess grace. Thus children who were baptized and who nevertheless could not believe were included among the regenerate. On the other hand believing adults without baptism were not considered in this group. Delitzsch carried this doctrine to its logical extremes by including baptized Socinians and Unitarians in the body of Christ.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁶In the matter of the Lord's Supper, Peters shows that here also the Erlangen theologians did not give faith its proper place. Peters explains the difference between Luther and the Erlangen theologians. "Wohl ficht Luther darum, dasz der Geist nur im Musseren Mittel wirken will, wohl

Connected with the "naturalistic" concept of baptism was a definite concept of grace. Grace was not considered the simple proclamation of God's gracious attitude to men because of the death of Jesus Christ. Such proclamation was powerless in transmitting grace. For the Erlangen theologians, grace in connection with baptism was not so much an attitude on the part of God as it was a quantity with an objective impersonal existence. The grace of baptism was the actual impartation of Christ to the nature of man. This impartation did not involve man's spirit or his mental attitude. To have grace was not to be under and aware of God's gracious favor, but it was to possess something. The concept of grace here is similar to the concept of gifts of grace given certain persons in the New Testament. For example, the gift of tongues was not the gracious attitude of God, but it was a definite gift given to particular persons. Here the resemblance stops.

Connected with the concept of grace in baptism was a complete unbalancing of the proper relationship between the Lutheran principles of salvation, sola gratia and sola fide. This was especially true in regard to children where grace was applied and salvation initiated without faith. According to the Lutheran doctrine, grace can only be personally appropriated through faith. With the understanding that grace was a given quantity to the nature of man, faith was made unnecessary. It is true that according

streitet er wider allen Spiritualismus für den 'Deus corporeus,' aber von einer besonderen Betonung unserer Leiblichkeit, wie sie mit den Erlangen Theologen auch in die Abendmahlslehre Eingang gefunden hat, ist er weit entriert. Für ihn ist der totus Christus mit Fleisch und Blut sowohl im Herzen wie im Leibe gegenwärtig. Die Gegenwart des Herrn zum Leibe, das Proprium des Abendmahles, wird nicht der Anlaß, die Leibseite zu betonen." Ibid., pp. 136f.

This critique could also be made against the Erlangen theologians in regard to baptism. Just because baptism is an application of physical water to our physical bodies does not permit us to emphasize any material operation apart from faith.

to the Erlangen theologians children were saved sola gratia, but they certainly were not saved sola fide. This was an example of extreme monergism. To the working of grace in baptism no response was required. The person of the child is completely passive. Though faith cannot be described as a work meriting grace, it certainly is the only means of appropriation.¹⁰⁷

The Erlangen theologians with their doctrine of the means of grace established two different ways of obtaining salvation. Children could be saved by baptism alone without faith. Adults had to be saved by both baptism and faith. In regard to salvation the same requirements are demanded from all according to the Scriptures. No place in the Bible speaks of salvation being given without personal faith.

This understanding of the means of grace gave rise to a category between regeneration and unregeneration. The regenerate were those who were baptized and who believed. The unregenerate were those who lacked both baptism and faith. But there were some who had just been baptized or who just believed. Baptized infants and unbaptized believers belonged in this third category. However, neither the Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions know of any such third category. There is no middle condition. A person, including an infant, is either for or against Jesus.

¹⁰⁷Peters shows how in the matter of the Lord's Supper, the Erlangen theologians violated the Lutheran principles that salvation is given through the word to faith. In this critique Peters does not use the word Glauben to describe faith, but rather Herz. It is wished that Peters would have used more explicit words; however the meaning is obvious. "Aber nun doch nicht so, wie Vilmar und Rocholl es darstellen, dass der Leib dem Leibe, der Geist dem Geiste begegne, vielmehr ist derselbe eine Christus sowohl dem Herzen in Wort als dem Munde in den Elementen gegenwärtig, beide, Herz und Mund, ziehen ihn in sich hinein. Dabei ist die manducatio oralis der manducatio cordalis zugeordnet, nicht umgekehrt die cordalis der manducatio oralis. Ein Herauslösen der leiblichen Nieszung aus dem Gesamtvollzug ist unmöglich. Der Leib Christi wirkt wohl

Infant faith

Like the Rationalists, the Supranaturalists, and Schleiermacher, the Erlangen theologians denied the possibility of infant faith.¹⁰⁸ Even though many of these theologians did attribute faith to infants, it was always according to a redefined understanding of faith. All were agreed in teaching that faith as a trust in God would only be worked in conscious individuals through the means of the spoken word. Baptism could lay the foundations of faith, but it could not create faith. So infant faith was denied for two reasons. (1) Children are incapable of this conscious relationship with God. (2) Baptism is powerless to create it. Though the Erlangen theologians were influenced by the philosophy of Romanticism in their anthropology and general concept of the means of grace, they were under the influence of Rationalism in saying that faith was a conscious act of man. In regard to faith they were synergists, since God demanded a certain level of consciousness before He could create faith. In the matter of the efficacy of baptism, they were extreme monergists.

unmittelbar auf unseren Leib, aber nur im Zusammenwirken mit der Niesung des Herzens. So gibt es kein Einwirken des Christusleibes auf die unterbewussten Tiefenschichten unserer Existenz ohne die bewusst erlährene Begegnung des Herzens mit dem totus Christus." *Ibid.*, p. 194. So in regard to baptism it can be said there is no saving activity on the body apart from faith.

¹⁰⁸ Apparently Karl Brinkel believes that the Erlangen theologians held to infant faith. He writes: "Nur die sogenannten 'Älteren Erlanger' und noch einige andere hielten an der Lehre vom Kinderglauben bei der Kindertaufe fest und lehrten mit der luth. Orthodozie, dass dieser Glaube im Kind durch das Mittel der Taufe gewirkt werde. Allerdings verstanden die 'Älteren Erlanger' dabei die Taufe meist als ein 'Naturmysterium' das auf die 'geistliche' Natur des Menschen wirke, . . ."

Brinkel includes the following among the Erlangen theologians:

The "naturalistic" concept of baptism as taught by the Erlangen theologians combined Scriptural elements with the philosophy of Romanticism and Rationalism. From the Scriptures they took the doctrine of original sin. The salvation needed by the child could be obtained in baptism. Romantic philosophy affected their anthropology and consequently their entire doctrine of the means of grace. Rationalism from the Enlightenment influenced them in defining faith as a conscious act of a rational being. These concepts taken over from Romanticism¹⁰⁹ and Rationalism¹¹⁰ had nothing to do with the doctrines of Luther.

Höfling, Th. Kliefoth, Heinrich Schmid, Martensen, Rezschwitz, and Vilmar. Die Lehre Luthers von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufe (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), p. 105. Though Brinkel explains what these theologians mean by faith, this concept has nothing to do with either Luther or Lutheran Orthodoxy.

¹⁰⁹Concerning Luther's position on the sacraments in comparison with "naturalistic" position as taught by the Erlangen theologians, Peters says: "Es ist da keine 'höhere geist-leibliche Natur,' kein 'himmlischer' Mensch, der, durch das Sakrament gestärkt, der ewigen Vollendung entgegenharrt, wie Parazelsus und Böhme es sehen, auch kein 'wiedergeborener Leibeskeim,' der durch die Taufe in uns hineingesenkt, durch das Sakrament mit Christi himmlischer Leiblichkeit gespeist, das Angeld des Auferstehungsleibes in unserem Leibe der Sünde und des Todes bildet, wie die durch Schelling von Böhme inspirierten lutherischen Theologen des vorigen Jahrhunderts es darstellen." Op. cit., p. 160.

¹¹⁰Brinkel calls the denial of infant faith a result of Idealism and Humanism. He writes thus. "Fragen wir danach, was sich eigentlich in diesen, sich auf das Bewusstsein des Menschen berufenden Einwänden gegen Luthers Lehre von der fides infantium für ein Denken kundtut, so ergibt sich, dass es letztlich nicht in biblischen und reformatorischen Aussagen, sondern in idealistisch-humanistischen Voraussetzungen gründet." Op. cit., p. 95.

CHAPTER V

INFANT BAPTISM AT THE END OF THE LAST CENTURY

Introduction

At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century there were theologians who combined concepts from both Luther and Schleiermacher in forming their doctrines of infant baptism. Unlike Schleiermacher and the Rationalists before him they wanted baptism to be considered as a real means of grace. This was the same influence of Luther which was incorporated into the "naturalistic" concept of baptism. Still these theologians could not surrender the basic principles of Schleiermacher and the Rationalists. Among these principles were: (1) the New Testament offers no evidence for infant baptism; (2) the baptism of the New Testament was intended only for adults; (3) faith can be produced by the preached word only and not by baptism; (4) children are incapable of believing; (5) because of the lack of faith in infants their baptism is incomplete; (6) this incompleteness is corrected when a child comes to faith through the preached word. This time may be confirmation.

Since infant faith was denied, infant baptism was said to have future significance so far as salvation is concerned. By saying that it had future significance they attempted to give infant baptism a role in the process of salvation without having to come to the doctrine of infant faith. Often their polemics against infant faith are specifically directed against Martin Luther, who held to this doctrine.

The three theologians chosen to represent this view are Ernst Bunke,

Reinhold Seeberg, and Adolf Schlatter. Bunke emphasizes infant baptism as the personal call of God to the child and as His promise of regeneration. Seeberg explains infant baptism as a reversal of the New Testament concept which required that faith be present before baptism be administered. Baptism makes salvation objectively available for infants. This salvation may later be subjectively appropriated in faith.

Schlatter sees in infant baptism an excellent expression of the priority of grace over faith. Schlatter, unlike Bunke and Seeberg, is a Reformed theologian. However, at this time in German theology the distinction between Lutheran and Reformed is not always clearly drawn. This will become evident as the doctrine of infant baptism taught by all three men will be shown to be more Calvinistic than Lutheran.

Ernst Bunke

In the years 1899 and 1900 Pastor Ernst Bunke of Münsterberg, Schlesien, was active in presenting his views on infant baptism. Even though Bunke is not too widely known today, his writings on baptism were well known in his day and influenced the positions of many others. Reinhold Seeberg in his Zur Systematischen Theologie says that Bunke's concept of infant baptism was a considerable advance in the understanding of it. What pleased Seeberg in Bunke's position was the denial that infant baptism could bring about regeneration in the child. Instead infant baptism was called the sacrament of personal calling for the child.¹

Bunke first expressed his views in the Deutsche Evangelische

¹"Es hieß jetzt: 'die Kindertaufe ist nicht die Wiedergeburt,' sondern 'das Sakrament der persönlichen Berufung'" (Bunke, vgl. Kähler,

Kirchenzeitung, edited by Adolf Stöcker. His first article appeared anonymously in this periodical under the title of "Dr. Lepsius contra Professor D. Cremer."² In the third installment of this article which appeared in 1900, Bunke confessed to being the anonymous author. During the same years, 1899 and 1900, Bunke contributed a host of articles to the same periodical. They all had to do with infant baptism in some way or other as their titles indicate. The articles were entitled: "Taufe und Glaube";³ "Was ist die Kindertaufe?";⁴ "Glaube und Kinderglaube";⁵ and "Wort und Sakrament."⁶ In 1900 he summed up his views in a book entitled Der Lehrstreit über die Kindertaufe,⁷ whose forward was contributed by Adolf Stöcker.⁸ The two most prominent concepts of Bunke's

Kirn). Dieser Gedanke bezeichnet fraglos einen erheblichen Fortschritt zur Erkenntnis des Wesens der Kindertaufe." Reinhold Seeberg, Zur Systematischen Theologie (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1909), p. 257.

²Deutsche Evangelische Kirchenzeitung, XIII (1899), 265ff., 209f., and 321ff. Hereafter this periodical is cited as DEKZ. It was to Lepsius that Cremer dedicated the second edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe with the words "meinem lieben Freund und Gegner Herrns Pastor Dr. Lepsius." Hermann Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe (Zweite, völlig neubearbeitete Auflage; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1901), p. iii.

³DEKZ, XIII (1899), 282ff.

⁴Ibid., pp. 352f. and 361f.

⁵DEKZ, XIV (1900), 281f.

⁶Ibid., pp. 286f. and 295ff.

⁷Der Lehrstreit über die Kindertaufe innerhalb der lutherischen Kirche (Kassel: n.p., 1909). Hereafter this book is cited as Lehrstreit.

⁸Adolf Stöcker, in addition to being the editor of the DEKZ, was also active in the Christian Socialist Party and took part in many programs for the welfare of the working class. Cf. "Stoecker, Adolf," Lutheran Cyclopaedia, edited by Erwin L. Lueker (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 1011. Stöcker approved of Bunke's position.

understanding of infant baptism were properly grasped and expressed by Seeberg. Very specifically Bunke says that infant baptism is not regeneration,⁹ but is to be understood rather as the sacrament of the personal calling into the kingdom of God.¹⁰ For Bunke regeneration is present only where there is faith. In turn, true faith can only be present in conscious individuals such as children are not. Therefore it is impossible for children to be made regenerate in baptism. In being baptized children are not regenerated, but are called to regeneration. The title of the book Der Lehrstreit über die Kindertaufe indicates Bunke's interest is slightly polemical. He first defines his position over against the position of the Lutheran Confessions and Luther. Then he examines the positions of those Lutherans whose views were prominent in that day. These men included Hüfling, Martensen, Cremer, and the elder Althaus. The remaining chapters are devoted to defining baptism, faith, and regeneration according to the Scriptures.

Baptism and infant baptism according to the Lutheran Confessions

The first task that Bunke sets for himself is to examine what the Lutheran Confessions and Luther have to say about baptism. His opinion concerning them is that they correctly teach that baptism is the offering of salvation, but they incorrectly teach that baptism works faith in infants. He agrees with them in that saving faith must be present for

⁹ Lehrstreit, p. 127. "Die Kindertaufe ist nicht die Wiedergeburt."

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 130. "Die Kindertaufe ist das Sakrament der persönlichen Berufung ins Reich Gottes."

justification, but disagrees with them when they teach that it is possible for children to have such saving faith. He comes to this conclusion after examining all of the Lutheran Confessions.

The Augsburg Confession, he claims contains no clear statement about the effects of baptism on children. It says only that baptism is necessary for children and that the essence of this sacrament is the offering of the divine salvation.¹¹ Similar is his understanding of the Apology. This confession does not teach that baptism in itself works regeneration or that baptized children have justifying faith. It is said that the significance of baptism here is that through it the person is offered salvation and taken into the congregation. It is in the congregation that salvation is imparted to those who believe through word and sacrament.¹² From the Smalcald Articles Bunke is given to understand that the salvation which is offered in baptism can be received only by that faith which is brought about by the spoken word of God. Bunke finds it impossible for children to receive the regeneration offered in baptism, because they do not possess that saving faith which is created by the preached word. Bunke says that in this confession Luther made no statement concerning the faith or regeneration of children. Luther's position on infant baptism presented in the Smalcald Articles is defined by Bunke as the personal proclamation of salvation's promises.¹³ Bunke's conclusion from these three confessions, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, and the Smalcald Articles, is that baptism is only the offering of salvation. In these

¹¹Ibid., p. 3.

¹²Ibid., pp. 6f.

¹³Ibid., p. 10.

he also finds nothing about the faith or regeneration of infants. Of course Bunke finds these conclusions to be in harmony with his own understanding of infant baptism.

He is much more critical, however, of Luther's two catechisms and the Formula of Concord. He believes that infant faith and regeneration are taught in these three confessions. The concept of baptism found in the Small Catechism is that the forgiveness of sins and regeneration are brought about where faith meets the word of God in the water. The 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," indicate to Bunke that Luther was ascribing a real and conscious faith in children in connection with their baptism. Bunke comes to this conclusion from the fact that Luther was writing his catechism for those who had been baptized as infants. However for Bunke it is an impossibility that children should have such a faith.¹⁴ Bunke interprets the essence of baptism as it is taught in the Large Catechism as offering divine salvation, forgiveness of sins, justification, and regeneration to the individuals receiving it. Even without faith, baptism continues to offer these blessings to the individual.¹⁵ While Bunke agrees with what the Large Catechism teaches about the essence of baptism, he disagrees with its conclusions on the operation of baptism. To prove infant faith Luther says in the Large Catechism that many including himself had received the Holy Spirit in baptism. Since these people received the Holy Spirit, it was concluded that these persons had saving faith. Bunke disagrees with Luther that the

¹⁴Ibid., p. 11.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 11.

present possession of the Holy Spirit teaches that children have saving faith in baptism. Bunke interprets the same evidence and comes up with another conclusion. To him it simply means that many people have received the Holy Spirit and show evidence that they still have Him. Having the Spirit means that the promise of grace in infant baptism is valid and on the basis of this promise one can and should receive faith, forgiveness of sins, regeneration and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Bunke does not doubt however, that Luther actually believed that with such evidence he was proving infant faith.¹⁶ Luther's belief in infant faith is further indicated for Bunke in that it is said that the child is carried to baptism in the hope that God would give it faith. Luther does not describe how it is possible for inarticulate children to have a faith which is worked by the word and accompanied by conversion. According to Bunke, Luther ascribes to a child the faith which normally belongs to an adult person, but does not develop the idea any further.¹⁷ Bunke accepts what Luther has to say about the nature or essence of baptism as the offering of forgiveness, but denies that it can create faith in infants.

The Formula of Concord follows the Large Catechism in ascribing to children the New Testament faith of adults with everything that is involved in producing such a faith.¹⁸ It is also taught here that if baptism is to have any saving activity, faith must be present in the infant. The concept of regeneration in the Formula of Concord is said to be

¹⁶Ibid., p. 16.

¹⁷Ibid., pp. 16f.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 17.

dependent on justification, which in turn is dependent on saving faith. Thus children are called regenerate in the Formula because they have saving faith.¹⁹

Bunke is quite critical of Luther's doctrine that children believe through their baptism. He says that even though Luther and the other reformers rejected Augustine's doctrine of the magical operation of baptism, they accepted a magical effect of prayer with which the Holy Spirit was involved. It is disturbing to Bunke that it is never explained how this faith is given to children. For him such a faith is impossible for infants, since faith always involves the mind and the will. He claims that Luther did not properly understand the pericope of the blessing of the children on which the concept of infant faith was established. Bunke cannot accept infant faith, since for him the Holy Spirit cannot be imparted unless there is participation of the ethical personality.²⁰

A year before he published his book, Der Lehrstreit über der Kindertaufe he wrote an article entitled, "Was ist die Kindertaufe?" in which he also opposed the concept of infant faith as taught by the Lutheran Confessions. He wrote:

It is more or less clear that the Lutheran Confessions maintain that new born children have faith through baptism. . . . However, the doctrine of infant faith contradicts the Scriptures and experience. What is necessary for human beings to be regenerated is lacking for children in their baptism. Infant baptism is not regeneration.²¹

Concerning what Luther says in the Large Catechism about infant faith, he

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 23.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 32f.

²¹ "Was ist die Kindertaufe?" DEKZ, XIII (1899), 352. Translation by present writer.

bluntly says that the Reformer erred.²²

While Bunke admittedly denies what the Lutheran Confessions teach about the operation of infant baptism, he does say that he holds to what they teach concerning the essence or nature of baptism. Here follows his own definition of what the Confessions teach on infant baptism. Into this definition he incorporates his own opinion of infant faith.

Infant baptism is the offering and promise of the salvation brought about by Christ to the individuals. It is the foundation and support for the subsequently arising faith in the baptized. The baptized will receive this faith by virtue of the Holy Spirit through the word. Infant baptism is not regeneration. This only happens when the baptized comes to faith.²³

In order to demonstrate what he believes to be the correct understanding of baptism, as he has just defined it according to his own explanation of the Lutheran Confessions, he gives the exegesis of certain Biblical passages dealing with regeneration, baptism and faith, and baptism and infant baptism.

Regeneration and baptism according to the New Testament

First Bunke defines regeneration according to the New Testament.

His study brings him to the conclusion that regeneration is an act of God

²²"Am ausführlichsten hat sich bekanntlich Luther im Großen Katechismus über die Taufe ausgesprochen. Dasz er die Kinder als gläubige Empfänger der Taufe darin ansieht, hörten wir schon, aber erinnern wir uns daran, dasz er in diesem Punkt geirrt hat." Ibid., p. 353.

²³Lehrstreit, p. 34. The translation by the present writer. In the Inhalts-Verzeichnis Bunke describes this understanding of infant baptism as "Der Begriff der Kindertaufe nach den Bekenntnisschriften ohne die Annahme des Glaubens." p. x. This is an admission on Bunke's part that his understanding of infant baptism is not strictly in keeping with the Lutheran Confessions.

which according to its essence can be divided into two parts. The first part consists in justification of the individual and his being freed from the entanglement of human guilt. Included in regeneration is the giving of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit inaugurates the new life in power. The other part of regeneration is conversion and faith. Only those persons can be regenerate who through conversion have come to faith. There can be no faith unless the word has awakened faith. Faith is as much the means of regeneration as are the word and baptism. The necessity of faith for regeneration and justification is said by Bunke to be the position of both the New Testament and the Lutheran Confessions.²⁴

Bunke then goes on to examine the relationship between baptism and faith according to the Scriptures. Through numerous citations he attempts to prove that baptism is efficacious only for those who have come to faith. His treatment of Matthew 28:19f. shall be included.

Bunke admits that in Matthew 28:19f. faith is not specifically mentioned as a prerequisite for the saving effectiveness of baptism. Still this concept of faith being required for receiving baptism is not denied in this passage. Bunke maintains that *μαθητευσατε*, which is to be translated "make disciples," includes the preaching of the Gospel and its being received in faith. This preaching of the Gospel is a prerequisite for receiving baptism. *βαπτισουτες* and *διδασκουτες* do not belong to the process of making disciples, but they are acts which are to be applied to those who are already disciples. For Bunke the baptizing,

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 86ff.

(*βαπτίζονται*) is an outward call which makes the person certain of his election. Receiving baptism is the outward sign which belongs to becoming a disciple of Jesus. Without baptism the disciples could not have regarded themselves as His disciples. Baptism was the seal of the state of grace for those who had by faith received the salvation that was proclaimed to them. Without baptism it would not be perceptible that the apostles belonged to the exalted Lord and to His congregation.

Teaching (*διδάσκοντες*) does not refer to the preaching of salvation, but to the instruction which the baptized person needs in order to be worthy of his calling and of his position as a disciple.²⁵ For Bunke the preaching of salvation is included in the making of disciples. Baptism and teaching are acts which are then applied to those who through faith in the word have already become disciples.²⁶

The other passages which are used to establish the relationship between faith and baptism are Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3ff.; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:26f.; Ephesians 5:26; 1:13; Colossians 2:11ff.; Hebrews 10:22; and 1 Peter 3:19-22. He concludes that the New Testament teaches that baptism is applied only to those who already have

²⁵Ibid., pp. 92f. Bunke's understanding of this passage is unique. Most of the Lutheran theologians of the nineteenth century who used this passage in connection with infant baptism saw the imperative form *μαθητεύσατε* being carried out by the participles *βαπτίζονται* and *διδάσκοντες*. As seen above Hüfling's arguments are largely based on this procedure. For Bunke on the other hand *μαθητεύσατε* is self-explanatory and does not depend upon the following participle forms to complete its meaning. "To make disciples" means to come to faith. Baptizing and teaching are subsequent independent actions which do not contribute to making disciples. A formula can be used to show the difference.

Bunke: making disciples or faith + baptism + instruction = complete discipleship.

Hüfling: baptism + instruction in the word = making disciples or complete discipleship.

²⁶This position is still held today by Karl Barth and Johannes Schneider. Barth writes: "Die Taufe ist im Neuen Testament die

come to faith. Even if faith is not mentioned specifically in connection with baptism, it is tacitly implied that if baptism is to have any saving efficacy, faith must be present. Since baptism is never discussed apart from faith in the Scriptures, it is not possible to determine the essence of baptism apart from faith.²⁷

For him baptism is that sacrament through which God offers and promises the grace of salvation to the individual. This offer and promise are communicated through the Holy Spirit. Connected with baptism is the efficacy of the Holy Spirit.

Bunke discusses the efficacy of baptism applied to three types of persons. If it is baptism which contains the offer of grace and leads an unbeliever to faith, it is also baptism which works regeneration and imparts the Spirit. If faith is already present at the time of the application of baptism, then it completes regeneration by imparting the Holy Spirit as the principle of the new life and it confirms in the individual's consciousness that he has been justified. If the entire justification has taken place including the impartation of the Spirit, then baptism is the sign that the Triune God has been active with His grace in the baptized. At the same time baptism is for all who receive it the reception into the congregation of the exalted Lord. This congregation he rules through the activity of the Spirit in word and sacrament. Thus Bunke lists three

unentbehrliche Frage des zum Glauben gekommenen Menschen." Die kirchliche Taufe (München: C. Kaiser, 1947), p. 30.

Schneider writes: "Die Taufe im Neuen Testament setzt die Umkehr des Menschen zu Gott, seinen Glauben an Christus und Bekenntnis diesen Glaubens voraus. . . . Die neutestamentliche Taufe ist Taufe der Christusgläubigen." Johannes Schneider, Die Taufe im Neuen Testament (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1952), p. 75.

²⁷ Lehrstreit, p. 107.

possible objects of baptism: (1) those who have no faith; (2) those who have faith but have not received the Holy Spirit; (3) those who have faith and have received the Holy Spirit.

It is in the first classification that infants are placed. They are baptized without faith and led to regeneration by the Holy Spirit. In infant baptism the child is offered and promised salvation. This offer and promise of salvation is attested by the child's being received into the congregation.²⁸ Here in the congregation the Triune God is active in saving souls through word and sacrament and accomplishes his plan of salvation. To understand Bunke's concept of infant baptism it should be remembered that for him infant baptism really is a baptizing of unbelievers.²⁹ Here Bunke seems to be influenced by Schleiermacher. Schleiermacher also understood baptism as working regeneration in the sense that it leads the child or unbeliever to faith by placing him in the congregation where God is active with His word. However, Bunke never goes to the extent that Schleiermacher does in calling infant baptism an erroneously applied baptism.³⁰ Schleiermacher, unlike Bunke, does not call infant baptism the offering and promise of salvation to the child. There can be no doubt that Bunke attempts to give the personal salvation of the child a bigger role in connection with infant baptism, than does Schleiermacher. However it should be noted that for both Bunke and Schleiermacher baptism does not of itself effect any change in the person of the child.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 114f.

²⁹Ibid., p. 115.

³⁰Friedrich Schleiermacher, Der Christliche Glaube (Dritte unveränderte Ausgabe; Berlin: Druck und Verlag von Georg Reimer, 1836), II, 385f.

Involved in Bunke's entire understanding of infant baptism is his denial of infant faith. In order to establish that there is no infant faith, he gives an exegesis of Matthew 18:1-4 and 19:13-15. These are the passages which have been traditionally used as evidence in demonstrating infant faith. It should be remembered that Bunke's understanding of regeneration is that it can only be present where justification and saving faith are present.³¹ Thus if Bunke denies the doctrine of infant faith, children would have to be considered unregenerate according to his own definition. The unbelief of children is one of Bunke's major arguments in establishing the fact that infant baptism is not regeneration. To demonstrate that infant baptism is not regeneration is really the main purpose in Bunke's writing his book, Lehrstreit Ueber die Kindertaufe.

Matthew 18:1-4 for Bunke does not deal with the relation of children to the kingdom of God, but with the believers' relation to God and to their fellow men. This passage concerns a strife over rank among the disciples. Jesus' blessing a child is to be understood by the words "convert" and "become as little children." Both phrases are said to explain each other and refer to self-humiliation. Therefore it is not the ethical condition of the child which is placed before the disciples as an example, since this condition is not worthy of praise in every instance. Rather that which is exemplary in the child as he stands in this circle of strangers is his modesty. Thus this passage does not concern the relationship between children and the kingdom of heaven, but the attitude which God requires of Christians to Himself and to one another if they are to enter the kingdom.³²

³¹Lehrstreit, p. 115.

³²Ibid., pp. 122f.

Bunke also dismisses Matthew 19:13-15 as being valid evidence for infant faith. Here the interpretation is similar to that of the previous passage. It is not the faith of children to which Jesus is referring, but their attitude. Here follows Bunke's interpretation of this pericope. The children are brought by their mothers to Jesus. This was not anything unusual, since it was the custom in those days for the leaders of the synagogue to lay their hands on children who were brought to them and to pray over them. In bringing the children to Jesus, the mothers thought that the Lord's blessing would be much more effective. The disciples discouraged the bringing of the children because their Lord was heavily burdened and because they did not think very highly of the personalities of children. They thought that inarticulate children could have no relationship to the kingdom of God. Jesus reprimands them for hindering His giving of a blessing to the children, because to those who are like children belongs the kingdom of heaven. The words "of such" ($\tau\omega\nu\ \sigma\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\nu$) refer not to the children, since the kingdom of the Messiah cannot belong to them. The requirements for entering the kingdom which are put forth in the Sermon on the Mount cannot be carried out by children. The words $\tau\omega\nu\ \sigma\omicron\kappa\omicron\upsilon\tau\omega\nu$ refer not to children but to those who have a child-like attitude. But Bunke does admit that there is some reference to children in this passage, since they are examples of those who receive blessings. Children are objects of grace and their attitude of simplicity and humility must be attained by those who want to belong to the kingdom. The concept that children can be objects of grace is in harmony with Bunke's understanding of infant baptism where children are objects of the promise and offer of grace.³³

³³Ibid., p. 123.

In examining the same pericope of the blessing of the children as it is found in Mark and Luke, Bunke uses another form of reasoning in coming to the same conclusion that the kingdom of God does not belong to the children and thus they do not have faith. Bunke asks whether the kingdom of God was already available when Jesus spoke these words or was it something to be given in the future. The Greek word *ἐστί* in the phrase "of such is the kingdom of God" is of little value in determining the time since it is doubtful whether Jesus would have used the word "is" in Aramaic. If the kingdom of God is present at this time, it is not present in the fulness of its gifts, but only present in the person of the king who will distribute the gifts at a future time after the work of redemption has been completed. The blessing which the Lord gave to the children at this time is the pledge for the future participation in His kingdom. When these children reach the age of understanding, they will be able to comprehend the redemption by Jesus Christ. At this time the grace which Jesus promised to them as children will work on them. Then they will return to the simplicity and humble attitude of a child and will be able to enter the kingdom of God. Such an interpretation of this passage gives support to Bunke's thesis that infant baptism is the promise of future regeneration.

Bunke claims that the pericope of the blessing of the children is valid evidence for infant baptism, but invalid evidence for infant faith and regeneration occurring through infant baptism. The blessing given the children by Jesus was not the blessing of the Holy Spirit. This blessing is given only to believers through baptism. At the time of the blessing of the children, the Holy Spirit was not the Spirit of regeneration. The baptism of the Spirit was first made possible after Pentecost.

So Bunke concludes that the pericopes of the blessing of the children do not prove that baptism has the same saving effect on children as it has on adults.³⁴

Incongruence between the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions

Bunke admits that his conclusions obtained from the Scriptures are not in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions. He says that it would be a great blessing if it would be commonly recognized that the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions do not agree on the matter of infant faith. Just as the Lutheran reformers and Luther were in error in equating the baptism of John with the baptism of the Spirit in the New Testament in spite of the clearest evidence to the contrary, so they also erred in ascribing to the children blessed by the Lord the same regeneration which the believers experienced only after Pentecost. Bunke feels bound by conscience to remain by what he considers to be the understanding of the Scriptures and to give up what he calls the fiction and invention of infant faith. On this matter he admittedly puts the Lutheran Confessions aside. Since infant faith is contrary to the Scriptures, it is superfluous to consider any theory of the magical operation of the Spirit which might happen in the word, through the sacrament or on the basis of the petitioning prayers of others. Such theories are worthless, since they do not require the ethical participation of the personality.³⁵ Bunke

³⁴Ibid., pp. 123f. If according to Bunke children could not believe at this time because the kingdom of God was not completely there and because the Holy Spirit was not the Spirit of regeneration, it may then be concluded that no one was a member of the kingdom or regenerate before Pentecost. It seems that Bunke in his zeal to discredit infant faith has proved too much. If regeneration were impossible before Pentecost, how unusual the words of Jesus, "Great is thy faith," would sound.

³⁵Ibid., p. 125.

believes that in the light of what the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions say about the origin and value of faith, it is correct to teach that infant baptism is not regeneration.³⁶

The correct understanding of infant baptism

It is evident that Bunke cannot base any argument for infant baptism on infant faith which he has found to be an erroneous concept. He finds the clue for a correct understanding of infant baptism in Colossians 2:11ff. where baptism and circumcision are compared. In this passage baptism is the baptism of the Spirit which takes the baptized into the fellowship of Christ and which presupposes faith in the recipient. This passage does not say anything specifically about the nature and efficacy of infant baptism. As it has been previously explained, children are not capable of receiving the baptism of the Spirit because of their inability to have faith. Nevertheless this passage gives an indication of how infant baptism can be explained as being in harmony with Scripture. What is significant is that circumcision was the sign of the old covenant and that according to Romans 2:25ff. it did not give the entire grace of the old covenant. Circumcision gave a certain share of the spiritual gifts to the people of the covenant under the condition that the Jew would conduct himself according to the regulations of the covenant. Circumcision was not an insignificant ceremony. On the part of men it was evidence of their obedience to the ordinances of God and a vow that they wanted to dedicate their children to the fellowship of God's covenant. God on His part gave the assurance that He would regard the circumcised child as a member of the covenant people, that He wanted to accomplish His plan of salvation in the child, and that

³⁶ Ibid., p. 127.

He would bestow the blessing of religious training on him.

From this interpretation of circumcision, infant baptism is then to be understood. Jesus' blessing the children indicates that the new covenant is not to be any smaller in scope than the old. Infant baptism is on a higher level than circumcision, because the benefits of the new covenant surpass those of the old. The powers of grace are greater than they were for the people of Abraham and Moses. However infant baptism and circumcision are similar in this one point: in both, the child does not come to the personal and assured possession of salvation. This can happen only when faith arises, which is the necessary prerequisite for the new covenant relationship. Likewise the Holy Spirit is not effective in the child through infant baptism. However in baptism God promises and guarantees to the child that the Spirit will be effective in him by virtue of the means of grace which are present in the congregation of the new covenant. Through the means of grace faith is awakened which is the necessary prerequisite for regeneration.³⁷

This does not mean that infant baptism is merely a baptism with water as opposed to the baptism of the Spirit. It cannot be a mere baptism with water, since the promise made to the child is from God through the Holy Spirit and not from man. Thus for Bunke infant baptism is a baptism of the Spirit, since the Spirit is there with the promise of regeneration from God. Still infant baptism may not be called the baptism of regeneration, since as has been shown above, it does not effect regeneration. Bunke prefers to call it "disciples' baptism." In "disciples' baptism" the command of the Lord to make disciples of all nations is fulfilled. Through baptism

³⁷Ibid., pp. 127ff.

children are received into the sphere of the discipleship of Jesus. Here in this sphere the grace of Jesus is active. Bunke summarizes his own understanding of infant baptism as follows:

Infant baptism in the new covenant corresponds with circumcision in the old covenant. It transfers its object out of the sphere of the corruption of sin into the sphere where God is active in extending His grace. It also gives the right of future possession and guarantees the claim for the personal possession of salvation. Infant baptism is the sacrament of the personal call into the kingdom of God.

Such a definition of infant baptism Bunke finds to be in harmony with the Lutheran Confessions as long as what is called the untenable theory of a directly worked infant faith is not maintained.³⁸

Since infant baptism is defined as the personal call into the kingdom of God, it is essential to see what Bunke understands by the words "personal call." Infant baptism is the seal that God has called those individuals who have been born within Christendom into His kingdom. The call sealed in baptism promises to the child that he will inherit the Father's blessings, which have been prepared by the Son and which are distributed to the congregation by the Spirit. The personal possession of the inheritance comes to the child when he believes. What Paul says about the Jewish people in Galatians 4:1f. is now made valid for the New Testament congregation. "That the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; But he is under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the father." For the baptized child the appointed time comes when he as the heir comes to faith through the Spirit's work of grace which was guaranteed to him in baptism. At this time the baptized child becomes an actual son of God. Through the Spirit's testimony about baptism the child is brought to regeneration.³⁹

³⁸Ibid., pp. 129ff. Italics in original. Translation by present writer.

³⁹Ibid., p. 131.

Conclusion

Bunke's underlying thought throughout his work on infant baptism has been the defense of the proposition that man is saved alone through faith and without faith there is no regeneration. This thought is even more emphasized when he closes his book with the following sentence: "We steadfastly cling to the watchword of the Lutheran Church: sola fide alone through faith."⁴⁰ However, it is the sola fide principle that Bunke himself violates. He himself says that children are not regenerate, because they lack faith. For him it is a Scriptural and confessional principle that for regeneration faith is necessary. Even though Bunke speaks much about regeneration, he never speaks of salvation in regard to children. Since he applies the sola fide principle to regeneration, it would seem only right that he apply it also in the matter of salvation. But this he never does. If he did apply the principle to the salvation of children, he would have to come to the conclusion that all children are not saved but damned, since it is not possible for children to have faith. It would seem that Bunke does not treat of the salvation of baptized children, since he would be afraid of the logical conclusions of his own principle of sola fide. Since Bunke nowhere says that baptized children are damned--in fact he says they have a claim to future salvation--it can be safely concluded that Bunke believes they are saved. Thus in the salvation of children he violates his sola fide principle since children are saved without faith.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 145. Translation by present writer. Italics in original.

The second violation of the sola fide principle is in connection with the definition of infant baptism as the sacrament which gives the guarantee and promise of the forgiveness of sins. Now Bunke says that the child actually has the guarantee and promise of the forgiveness of sins, and regeneration, but not the actual possession of these. In so far as the child possesses the promise, he possesses something which is a gift of grace. Thus the child has the promise without the benefit of faith. Here Bunke has violated his sola fide principle again, because the child possesses the promise without faith. One has to ask whether it is possible to have a promise from God without having faith. Wherever God gives a promise, it is to be accepted in faith. There is no promise for the individual unless he has faith. Abraham accepted the promise in faith and now we accept Christ's promise of eternal life in faith. God does make promises to those who are incapable of faith, but he makes them to individuals so that they will believe them. Thus the giving of a promise in baptism without faith is a violation of the sola fide principle, because only by faith can we accept promises of God.

Bunke's differentiation between regeneration and the promise of regeneration is also open to question. Could it not be said that he who has the promise from God has what the promise offers? Thus whoever has the promise of the forgiveness of sins does have the forgiveness as a possession that he can rely on. Therefore might it not be said that he who has the promise of regeneration has regeneration, at least in some sense? What to Bunke appear as two opposing concepts, that infant baptism is not regeneration and that infant baptism is the promise of regeneration, are not really so different as Bunke makes them out to be.

It is also difficult to see in Bunke's position what exactly the

difference is between the baptized and unbaptized children of Christian parents. He says that baptism is the seal of the common call of God to children born within Christendom. One would have to ask whether an unbaptized child born within Christendom is any less called than a baptized one. After all birth determines the call of which baptism is only a seal. If both baptized and unbaptized children of Christians are equally called, there would be no real necessity for the application of baptism. This is especially true if one remembers that Bunke says that baptism is a seal to the consciousness. It is on account of the children's lack of consciousness that Bunke has denied infant faith. If children do not have consciousness, how can baptism as a seal to the consciousness be of any benefit to them? Thus it appears that baptism does not really change the lot of children born within Christendom. The real "means of grace" is being born of Christian parents and not baptism. Baptism would have no effect on children born of heathen parents, since it is the seal of the call to children born within Christendom. In the case of children born outside of Christendom, there is no call to seal. Baptism would be a seal without any content.

Bunke's position also involves a downgrading of the sacrament of baptism in relation to the preached word. Even though he may speak about baptism producing regeneration and completing regeneration, it is the preached word alone that works it. Baptism can be said to work regeneration in the sense that it puts the baptized into a position within the congregation to hear the preached word. This is a concept propounded previously by Schleiermacher. However, it is really the preached word that works faith which is the necessary constituent for regeneration. Bunke makes it quite plain that it is the preached word and not baptism

which works faith. Thus the preached word has a power which baptism does not have. This is the power to convert. In fact without the preached word, baptism can effect nothing. The promise made to the child in baptism is a promise that in reality is not able to effect anything in or for the child. For Bunke it is not the word of God in and with the water that does such great things, but the preached word of God accompanying and following baptism. This is evident when Bunke says that a child can be brought to regeneration in the word about baptism. The word is really apart from the water. Bunke does speak about baptism giving the Spirit to those who have already come to faith; but in the matter of faith, conversion, and regeneration, baptism is powerless. It is not only because of the lack of consciousness that infant faith is denied, but also because of the impotence of baptism.

Against Bunke as well as against those who have a similar understanding of infant faith, the charge of synergism can be leveled. The charge of synergism can be made in so far as they demand a certain level of consciousness in the person before God can create faith by His grace. Thus the operation of grace becomes dependent on the level of consciousness attained by the individual. Having faith or not having faith is made to depend on consciousness.

One cannot be satisfied with Bunke's exegesis and the way he applies his own results. This is especially true in two passages, Matthew 28:19f. and Colossians 2:11f. From Matthew 28:19f. he understands that baptism is to be applied only to those who by faith are now disciples. But then he turns around and uses the same passage to support an idea which he calls "disciples' baptism." Infant baptism is "disciples' baptism," since

it makes the children members of the outward circle of disciples. Thus he uses the word disciples in one case to refer to those who have come to faith through the preached word, and in another case to those who participate in outward membership. The concept of outward discipleship is a blatant contradiction of his own exegesis of the passage.

About Colossians 2:11f. he says that the baptism referred to here is the baptism of the Spirit which is applied to adult believers. For him this passage makes no reference to infant baptism at all. Still it is this passage which gives him the clue to the understanding of infant baptism, because it refers to circumcision. Whether one agrees with Bunke's exegesis is not the point at hand. The point is that if he says that the passage has no reference to infant baptism, then he should not use it to establish infant baptism. Even though Bunke uses Matthew 28:19f. and Colossians 2:11f. in his understanding of infant baptism, it must be frankly said that for him infant baptism is provable neither by Biblical command nor by example.

It is true that Bunke through Biblical exegesis has attempted to prove that infant faith is not taught in the Scriptures. However, it should be stated that this is denied not only on Biblical grounds, but also on psychological ones. In connection with his discussion on the Smalcald Articles he says that infant faith is completely excluded according to his psychological conceptions.⁴¹ Bunke denied infant faith because of psychological reasons, even before he attempted an exegesis of Matthew 18 and 19. His exegesis in this case would only serve to prove

⁴¹Ibid., p. 10. "Wiederum müssen wir sagen, dass nach unseren psychologischen Vorstellungen hiedurch völlig ausgeschlossen ist, dass die Kinder diesen zum Empfang der Wiedergeburt in der Taufe notwendigen Heilsglauben besitzen."

what he had already accepted as true apart from the Scripture. His conclusions would be established even before he examined the evidence.

There can be no doubt that baptism does play a more important role in the personal salvation of the child with Bunke than it does with Schleiermacher. For Bunke it was the promise of regeneration, while for Schleiermacher it was a matter of indifference whether it should even be continued. However, their basic understanding concerning baptism were the same. The major difference was that Bunke wanted baptism to play a role in the salvation of the child in spite of the conclusions of his own research, while Schleiermacher followed the same results to their logical conclusion and expressed his willingness to give up infant baptism.

Reinhold Seeberg

Reinhold Seeberg's most extensive treatment of infant baptism appears in a series of lectures given at the University of Berlin which were then subsequently published in 1909 under the title of Kur Systematischen Theologie. His understanding of infant baptism was very similar to Bunke's. Both men wrestled with the problem of trying to keep infant baptism as an integral part of the process of personal salvation without coming to an acceptance of the doctrine of infant faith. Seeberg was acquainted with Bunke's definition of infant baptism as the sacrament of the personal call of God and commended this concept as being a considerable advance in the understanding of infant baptism.⁴² Like Bunke Seeberg defined infant baptism as the promise of forgiveness and regeneration.⁴³ This concept put

⁴² Seeberg, op. cit., p. 257.

⁴³ Reinhold Seeberg, Grundriss der Dogmatik (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1932), p. 99.

the saving significance of infant baptism into the future. By so doing Bunke and Seeberg avoided on one hand the concept of those who said that baptism had no significance for children and on the other hand the concept of those who taught that baptism created faith in the child⁴⁴ or that it had some effect on the nature of the child.⁴⁵

Seeberg discussed another problem which concerned many in the last century. Not a few had the problem of justifying the continued use of infant baptism, since the New Testament knew only of adult baptism and not infant baptism.⁴⁶ Seeberg attaches the justification of infant baptism to the existence of the Volkskirche.⁴⁷ Infant baptism arose with the Volkskirche and its continued use, and it was dependent on the continued existence of this type of church. For Seeberg infant baptism was the baptism of the Volkskirche.

The Scriptural understanding of baptism

For Seeberg baptism and the preached word have the same effects. What the Scriptures attribute to the word in one place is attributed to baptism in another place. Baptism and the word both can give regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Therefore baptism does not bring just a portion of the gifts of salvation to the individual, but it brings all of them. The difference between baptism and the preached word cannot be a difference in regard to their contents, since

⁴⁴Seeberg, Zur Systematischen Theologie, p. 255.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 256.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 254. Cf. also Grundriss der Dogmatik, p. 98. "Ein biblischer Beweis der Kindertaufe lässt sich nicht bringen."

⁴⁷Seeberg, Zur Systematischen Theologie, p. 257.

baptism does not bring any gifts to the individual which the word does not also bring. Never can baptism be regarded as a substitute for the preached word, because baptism can only have an effect on the individual receiving it if the word has preceded and accompanied the baptizing. Without the preached word baptism is nothing or it is just a step in the process of the word's operation. As we shall see later, it is into this latter category that infant baptism belongs. Infant baptism is a step in the process of the word's operation. Seeberg goes on to say that only after the word has worked on the soul is there any comprehension of the gifts of baptism. As the person is led to comprehend the gifts of baptism, so he is led in the same degree into a deeper understanding of the word. It should be noted here that Seeberg does not say that the power of baptism is the word in the water, but it is the word which precedes and accompanies the water of baptism.⁴⁸

What Seeberg says about baptism in the New Testament will further demonstrate his concept that the power of baptism is the word which precedes and accompanies baptism. It is said that the catechumen was first instructed about Christ and Christianity. Through this instruction the catechumen was brought to an awareness of God's presence, a consciousness of guilt, a temporary experience of forgiveness, and a perception of the agitating power of the Spirit. However, what the preached word did was just preparatory for one particular act. Through this act the catechumen by virtue of his confession would become a member of God's people and would receive forever a portion in the new covenant. This all important act

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 265ff.

was baptism. Through baptism the feelings of the soul were collected and concentrated in one moment. What was previously just sentiment and inspiration became a permanent conscious possession through baptism. Baptism did not work mechanically as if its working were dependent on the recitation of some sentence before the act. Neither did it work magically as if it effected something ex opere operato, within the person. Seeberg regarded baptism as coming at the end of a psychological process. Through psychological preparation the soul was inwardly prepared for the experience of the wonderful. When this psychological preparation brought the individual to a realization of salvation, he was capable of making a confession about salvation. At this time he was conscious of the fact that for his guilt there were grace and forgiveness. Through baptism he also feels that he is drawn into the fellowship of Christ's life and death. He is circumcised in the inner man. Single gifts which were previously held before him are brought together as a unit in baptism through the guarantee of the Spirit. So far as salvation on this earth is concerned he has reached the ultimate in baptism and now he can regard himself as an heir of the new creation and of the eternal consummation.⁴⁹ To sum it up briefly, baptism is regarded by Seeberg as the culminating point of the psychological process under the word. Baptism and the word do not differ in regard to essence, but they do differ in what they psychologically effect. Baptism brings together in one act what the word does in many acts.

Seeberg also describes baptism as a particular point of time in the process of salvation. It is the goal to which the preached word strives

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 268f.

and it is also the beginning point for the new life under the preached word. For the catechumen, baptism makes the feelings and thoughts produced by the preached word a permanent possession of the soul. If baptism has already created a permanent consciousness of salvation in the individual, then it is this permanent consciousness which is the soul's agency of appropriating additional Christian preaching. Thus in the process of salvation baptism is said to have a middle position. It is the end of the process which leads to Christ and the beginning of the road which goes with Christ. Baptism makes the contents of the preached word a permanent possession and leads the Christian into a new life under the word.⁵⁰

Baptism as a one time act differs from the word which is applied in a series of acts. When the word brings forgiveness and the Spirit, it does it gradually in many phases. These individual acts are directed to that one time act from which the confessing Christian can be assured that the gifts of God's people will abide in him. In this act he also enters into a lasting fellowship with God. Thus baptism is distinct from the word in that the former is a one time act carried out in the congregation. What the word gives, it gives again and again. What baptism gives, it gives once and for all time. For the mature Christian, baptism can serve as a source of strength and comfort. A person's consciousness of sin may become weak and the efficacy of the preached word may come to an end. Should this happen, baptism can serve as a support to which the person can go back. In baptism the individual can find a source of motivation. The motivation which baptism supplies is that the person can be brought back to

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 271.

an awareness that in baptism he has entered into fellowship with God and was made a member of God's people. Baptism as a one time act performed before others is a source of comfort and power because it can present the gifts of baptism as realities when the individual is not subjectively aware of them. The mere fact that it has been performed in the presence of others can make the Christian inwardly confident of the salvation received though the word. The Christian can have certainty from his baptism because through it he is participating in the historical benefits of a large fellowship. Through baptism salvation becomes for the Christian an historical fact of enduring significance. Baptism by engrafting the personal experience of the believer into the fellowship of the church makes salvation an historical reality. Because baptism works this certainty in the believer, it is the beginning point of that life in which the gifts of salvation develop to perfection.⁵¹

Since Seeberg claims that the preached word and baptism both have the same content and give the same gifts, it naturally follows that both should work regeneration. It is easy to explain how both the word and baptism can work forgiveness; but there would be some difficulty in the matter of regeneration. There would be difficulty in maintaining that a person was regenerated twice, once by the word and once by baptism. In order to maintain that both the word and baptism work regeneration, Seeberg speaks of different aspects of regeneration. The word works regeneration in so far as it gradually works faith and love through a series of successive acts. Baptism is said to work regeneration in so far as it makes faith

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 27ff.

and love a permanent possession of the soul. Regeneration through the word is the development of the new life in the soul, and regeneration through baptism is the enduring condition of the Christian life. Regeneration through baptism and the word are related in the same way as "being" (Sein) and "becoming" (Werden). Both work regeneration and therefore both have the same inner effect. But the regeneration of baptism produces a permanent lasting effect (Sein) in the individual while the regeneration of the word is only a momentary action.⁵²

Infant baptism

For Seeberg the origins of infant baptism lie in darkness. There is no passage in the New Testament which gives any definite testimony about it. 1 Corinthians 7:14 is said not to offer any conclusive evidence. This passage deals with an unbelieving partner being sanctified through the believing one. To substantiate the holiness of the unbelieving partner the holiness of their children is mentioned.

Seeberg says that if these children had been baptized, the offering of them as evidence would have been senseless. Those passages in Acts where entire households are reported as being baptized can only be valid to prove infant baptism if the matter of infant baptism can first be established on other bases. However, for Seeberg there is no historical evidence for infant baptism and dogmatical reasons are ruled out. Thus for Seeberg the baptizing of entire families is not legitimate evidence in the establishing of infant baptism. According to Seeberg, infant

⁵²Ibid., pp. 273f.

baptism was not known until the last half of the second century. Through a gradual process it became established as a regular church practice. In the fifth century it was in common use. However during this process in which infant baptism was coming into use, there were certain conscientious scruples against it, since it seemed to approach the magical theories of the mystery religions. These scruples against infant baptism only disappeared when the Volkskirche became a common phenomenon among the people. Then the assurance could be given that the baptized child would be brought up in Christian circumstances.⁵³ Thus it was with the Volkskirche that infant baptism had its origin.

The baptismal rite used in connection with the baptism of adult catechumens was also used in infant baptism. Faith was required of the child, the devil was exorcized, and the children were brought to the church during Lent as a sign of penance. Seeberg sees significant dogmatical points in the fact that infant baptism became common practice when the church became a Volkskirche and that the theories and concepts concerning adult baptism were applied to infants in their baptism.⁵⁴

Looking at infant baptism from a dogmatical point of view, Seeberg maintains that the infant is not capable of receiving the high spiritual gifts in baptism of which the adult is capable. The infants' lack of ability to receive the high gifts of baptism is due to their lack of ability to undergo the psychological preparation under the preached word which is a prerequisite for receiving any benefits from this sacrament.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 274ff.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 276.

On the basis of Scripture and experience, Seeberg completely rules out any ability on the part of the child to receive the new life of faith and love.⁵⁵ For him the concept of infant faith is as impossible as it is foolish. It is also against sound reason. Seeberg believes that such things as infant faith should not be permitted in religion.⁵⁶ Since it is evident that infant and adult baptism are different from one another on the matter of faith, Seeberg explains them by comparing them. In the baptism of adults, which is the baptism of the New Testament, the psychological preparation under the preached word is followed by the certainty given in baptism. With children this process is reversed. With children they receive the objective element of salvation in baptism and then this is followed by the subjective action of the word upon the soul. For adults baptism has an immediate inner experience and it is subjective in character, since it involves the consciousness. For children baptism is purely objective in character. Not until the application of the preached word do the children have an inner and subjective experience. For adults the "becoming" (Werden) precedes the permanent condition of salvation (Sein). With children it is reversed. They receive the permanent assurance of salvation, its objective part (Sein) first. This Sein which they have from baptism is the starting point for the future development under the

⁵⁵A similar position on infant faith was held by Albrecht Ritschl. He writes: "Der Glaube an Christus kann nur im reifern Lebensalter erwartet werden. . . . Was als für die Folgezeit sich als das umfassende Motive des christlichen Lebens bewährt, kann im Kindesalter nicht direkt weder zum Verständnis gebracht noch erlebt werden. Weil im System der Glaube an Christus als Hauptmotiv alles Guthandelns dargestellt wird, versucht man es, den unmündigen Kindern die Liebe zum Heilande beizubringen und durch diese Argument die sittliche Erziehung methodisch zu leiten. Man kann ja zugeben dass im Kindesalter die Liebe zum Heiland dem Glauben an Christus analogus ist. Indessen die letztere Leistung ist etwas sehr Ernsthaftes, das Erste aber ist Spiel. Denn sonst würde es dem Kinde nicht zugänglich sein." Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung (Zweite verbesserte Auflage; Bonn: Adolf Marcus, 1883), III, 556.

⁵⁶Seeberg, Zur Systematischen Theologie, p. 277.

word (Werden). Both adults and infants in their baptism are said to have a common relationship to the word. Just as adult baptism is administered on the basis of the preached word which has preceded, so infant baptism is administered on the basis of the word which is to follow. If infant baptism is not carried out on the basis of the future application of the word, it becomes either an outward ineffective ceremony or magic. Only under the condition that the word will follow does infant baptism have any content to offer. For only in the word will the Spirit be effective in the child's life.⁵⁷

In regard to salvation the child born within Christendom has certain advantages over the adult proselyte. First of all, the proselyte must of his own free will and decision enter into that fellowship where the word is effective. On the other hand, the child has already entered into this fellowship through his birth. All that remains is for his parents and the congregation to bring him up as a conscious member of their fellowship. As the faith of the adult catechumen becomes historical when he enters this fellowship through baptism, so the faith of the child is presupposed to be historical from its origin. The child's faith is historical from the very beginning because through birth he and the congregation are destined for one another. The birth of the child is an historical connection between his life and the life of the congregation. What the catechumen has through a gradual process under the preaching of the word, the child already has through his birth. Since the child is born within the Christian fellowship, he is already in a position to hear the word and to come under its influence. The proselyte receives the Werden from the word and the

⁵⁷ Ibid., pp. 273f.

Sein from his baptism. On the other hand the child receives the Sein by being born into the Christian community and the Werden from the word which is to follow. For the child born of Christian parents the connection between himself and the congregation comes through his birth and for the adult proselyte it comes through the preached word. Seeberg says that baptism takes the child into the congregation. By birth, however, the child already stands in connection with the congregation.⁵⁸

Seeberg recognizes three conditions which must be fulfilled before infant baptism may be administered. First of all, it is required that the parents, sponsors, and congregation have faith in the efficacy of God's word. Secondly, the child must be born into the Christian congregation as evidence that God has elected him to be His own. The third condition for administering infant baptism is that both the parents and the congregation have the desire to place the child under the influence of the preached word. Where these three conditions are present, infant baptism can be administered. Under these conditions it can be assured that the child will be brought under the influence of the word and that through this word he will receive the gifts of the new covenant. Since the assurance that the word will be applied can be given, it is not presumptuous to promise and give a guarantee to the child that he will have a part in the Christian congregation and in the benefits of salvation which are connected with it. Since the child is put into a position through baptism which requires further development in the word, the parents, sponsors, and congregation are obligated to give the child a Christian education. Thus the function of

⁵⁸Ibid., pp. 279f.

the sponsors is not to confess the Christian faith in the child's stead, but to obligate the child to the faith which comes from the word.⁵⁹

Seeberg admits the possibility that the child may never come to faith or that he may come to faith rather late in life instead of earlier. However, in this there is a similarity between the baptized child who has not come to faith and the proselyte who has been baptized after he has come to faith. To the baptized proselyte remains the choice of whether or not he will remain what he has become through his baptism. The child has the choice of whether or not he will live up to what his baptism requires, namely faith. It might appear that the adult who has come to baptism through his own free will has a better opportunity for living up to what his baptism requires than does the child. The adult has of his own free will elected to be baptized, while the child has not. However, Seeberg sees certain conditions in the child's life which also give him a good opportunity to remain faithful to what his baptism requires of him. Active on the child's behalf in bringing him to faith are the will and example of his parents and the influence of his surroundings, which include religious education and Christian customs. When the unconscious mind upon which the Christian element has already worked comes to consciousness, it already has a permanent possession of salvation which is not in any way inferior to that of an adult's. The working of the Holy Spirit in the child is in direct proportion to the degree in which the child comes under the working of the congregation, since it is here that the Spirit is effective.⁶⁰

⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 280f.

⁶⁰Ibid., pp. 281f.

Now that Seeberg has explained how the New Testament baptism can be fitted to meet the particular requirements of infants, he goes on to discuss the way in which baptized children possess salvation. The child's possession of grace is compared to the circumstances in which an adopted child finds himself. The adopted child is born humbly and without dignity. But through his adoption he becomes the possessor of many things, including a refined culture and the privileges of his adopted parents. He begins to possess all these things gradually as he becomes subjectively capable. Similar to this is the situation of the child who through baptism is placed under the working of the Holy Spirit in the congregation. The baptized child can make the benefits, which he has received as a permanent possession through baptism, meaningful for his soul as he becomes subjectively capable. In this connection, Seeberg speaks of two ways in which spiritual gifts can be possessed. They can be possessed in so far as they are available for us and in so far as we make them our personal possession. He claims that the objective possession of salvation is possible without the subjective possession. But he does say that the subjective possession is not possible without the objective possession. It is this objective possession that children are capable of receiving. They possess the benefits of salvation only in the manner that the possibility of inheriting them is open to them. The child only becomes capable of the subjective possession of salvation when he becomes capable of the spiritual acts of love and faith.⁶¹

⁶¹Ibid., pp. 282f. Karl Girgensohn in his dogmatics endorses Seeberg's position on infant baptism that it is not regeneration, but only the objective and effective promise of regeneration. Grundriss der Dogmatik (Erlangen und Leipzig: A. Deichertische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1924), p. 173.

By maintaining that the child is not subjectively capable of salvation offered in baptism, Seeberg does not believe that he is taking anything away from baptism or detracting from the omnipotence of God Who can deal with the individual in the way in which He wants. However, Seeberg claims that the miracles of God are never done against those laws of nature which He Himself has established. The miracles of God are said to be God's working to a definite purpose in a particular form of these established laws. Miracles are manipulations of the laws of nature and not transgressions of them. The impossibility of infant faith is put by Seeberg on the same level as the impossibility of infants' conceiving children, their discovering planets, and their preaching sermons. It is said if God had wanted infants to believe, He would have given them other abilities than He has. Seeberg says that it is a miracle when God gives spiritual feelings, thoughts, and will to those who are capable; but it is nonsensical and no miracle when the soul which is not capable of willing and thinking should receive that which is only possible for willing and thinking individuals. According to Seeberg, anyone who accepts infant faith is twisting God's ordinances arbitrarily.⁶²

In baptism the child does not subjectively receive regeneration, but only receives the objective possibility of regeneration. The latter may develop into a subjective reality. A baptized child can only be considered regenerate when he becomes a pious child. This occurs when the child has begun a life of love and faith and has entered into a reciprocal fellowship with God. Such a life of faith and love results from the preaching

⁶²Seeberg, Zur Systematischen Theologie, pp. 283f.

of the word in the home, school, or church.⁶³ Even in the case of the baptized child the actual cause of regeneration remains the preached word. Seeberg describes infant baptism as leading to the goal of regeneration. He says: "We will say accordingly that the child's baptism is not regeneration, but it is the objective and effective promise of regeneration; nevertheless it points to the goal of regeneration."⁶⁴

Seeberg summarizes his concept of infant baptism in three points.

(1) Baptism is the acceptance of the child into the fellowship of the Christian church. (2) Through baptism the child is adopted by God through the Spirit Who acts within the church. (3) Baptism is for the child the objective and effective promise of regeneration.⁶⁵

The necessity of a confession of faith

Infant baptism is of primary importance for Seeberg for the child's religious life, since it is the basis and beginning of this life. The normal life of the Christian child develops from baptism to an understanding of baptism. With baptism begins the efficacy of the word which drives the child to experience subjectively what he has been objectively promised in baptism. There comes a time in the religious development of the baptized child under the influence of the word when the objective possession of baptism becomes the personal possession of his life. Confirmation has been established by church custom as the time that this should occur. After a period of religious instruction, the child in confirmation makes a public confession of his faith before the congregation. Confirmation is

⁶³Ibid., p. 284.

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 285. Italics in original. Translation by present writer.

⁶⁵Ibid.

not only an outward ordinance of the church, but it also fulfills an inner need. Even without confirmation it is possible for the child to reach a point at which he can feel himself to be a child of God, a member of the church, and a possessor of its gifts. Confirmation does not bring any new gifts to the child which baptism has not already brought. It is only the recognition that the gifts of baptism have become a personal possession. Seeberg describes the child who has not made his confession as being in the state of receptivity. His connection to the church is through his parents. When the child himself makes a personal confession, this connection may then be described as being actively his own.⁶⁶

Infant baptism as the baptism of the Volkskirche

Seeberg permits the baptizing of infants only under the condition that the child will be brought into a Christian atmosphere. Where a particular household is estranged from religion and where positive religious sentiments are completely lacking, there can be sincere scruples concerning the use of infant baptism. However, as long as Christianity is a force in the life of the people and this does happen where the state and church are brought together in the Volkskirche, infant baptism can be practiced. Since children can receive some Christian education in the school, it is of prime importance that the Volkskirche be continued. If the Volkskirche should ever be discontinued and the people go back to heathenism, infant baptism would best be dropped or used only in smaller

⁶⁶Ibid., pp. 285ff.

circles. The people would go back to heathenism if the church would lose its character as a Volkskirche or if the state should break its connection with the church. Should this ever happen, the church would assume its original character as missionary church and the baptism of infants would give way to the baptism of adults. However, as long as there is a Volkskirche, children should be baptized, since this is the normal way for them to come to God. Along this way the Spirit will lead them to salvation.⁶⁷

For Seeberg infant baptism and the Volkskirche were so intimately connected with one another that he could write that the struggle to keep the Volkskirche was the struggle over infant baptism.⁶⁸

Conclusion

Many of Seeberg's arguments are similar to those previously offered by Schleiermacher. Both Seeberg and Schleiermacher agreed on the following points: (1) Infant baptism is not the baptism of the New Testament. (2) The Baptism of the New Testament is adult baptism. (3) Faith can come only through the preached word and not through baptism. (4) Children cannot receive faith because they are not sufficiently conscious to receive the preached word. (5) Infant baptism is incomplete because of the lack of faith. (6) This incompleteness is corrected by the application of the preached word and is to be supplemented by confirmation. (7) Both baptism and the preached word can be said to work regeneration, if regeneration is given two different meanings. (8) Baptism is really only a particular point of time in the process of the application of the preached word.

⁶⁷Ibid., pp. 289ff.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 292.

The points of agreement between Seeberg and Schleiermacher are many.

Seeberg, however, is more positive in his approach to infant baptism than is Schleiermacher. Seeberg is faced with the situation of having infant baptism as the commonly used form of baptism which is dispensed within the framework of the Volkskirche. Since infant baptism is a phenomenon that is said to have grown up with the origin of the Volkskirche, Seeberg attaches the continuance of infant baptism to the Volkskirche. Just as infant baptism arose with the Volkskirche so it will last just as long as this type of church lasts.

Being faced with the phenomenon of infant baptism within the framework of the Volkskirche, Seeberg attempts to justify the practice. It cannot be justified as the Scriptural baptism. Rather than suggesting that the practice of baptizing infants be stopped, he reverses what he understands to be the Biblical concept of baptism and applies it to children. Seeberg's Biblical concept of baptism is that it is an act which concentrates in one moment that which is offered in the preached word. It is given only to those who already believe in order to make their possession of salvation a more lasting one. Baptism assures the believer of his salvation. For children Seeberg reverses this order. They receive baptism first and then later when they come to maturity they come to faith through the preached word. In baptism children receive what Seeberg calls the objective element of their salvation and in preaching they receive faith which is the subjective element.

Seeberg's reasoning is objectionable in many points. If he finds that infant baptism is a phenomenon of church history connected with the Volkskirche and not in accordance with Scripture, he might suggest that its practice be given up in favor of adult baptism. Schleiermacher came

to this conclusion after examining the New Testament evidence. Infant baptism should be defended on its own merits and not the merits of the Volkskirche. The church is not obligated to continue practices which though they have historical attestation are contrary to the Scriptural practices. The Lutheran Reformation was in part a protest against much which was handed down through tradition and was not in harmony with the Scripture. Thus many practices were given up because they were contrary to the Scripture. The same attitude should be taken to infant baptism, if it is just a mere product of ecclesiastical history and contrary to the Biblical concept of baptism, as Seeberg claims. With this attitude infant baptism should be given up, since it eliminates later adult baptism, which for Seeberg is the Scriptural one. It has to be asked of Seeberg whether it is right to defend a church practice which is not in harmony with Scriptural concepts. All that can be expected from Seeberg concerning infant baptism is a rationalizing of present ecclesiastical practice and not a legitimate Scriptural explanation. Even though Seeberg's entire approach is highly questionable, it is necessary to examine Seeberg's various arguments set forth in favor of infant baptism.

According to Seeberg, infant baptism gives the objective part of salvation first and the preaching later gives the subjective part. Such an interpretation of infant baptism is purely arbitrary. If Seeberg has understood the baptism of the New Testament as being applied only to those come to faith, how can he then reverse the order and apply baptism first without offering any reason for doing so? It is said by Seeberg that New Testament baptism gave the subjective element of salvation to the believer in that it made salvation more certain for him. If baptism makes the person more sure of his salvation, it is questionable whether it can

be applied to people who do not already have salvation through faith. This is the case with children. Is it possible for that which makes more sure to be given before the fact itself? In other words, can that which makes us more certain of salvation be given before the salvation itself is given? Seeberg, of course, says that baptism can be administered before the salvation itself is given personally to the child. However, Seeberg admits that until faith from the preached word is present, such baptism is really without any significance for the child. Since baptism is really without any significance for the child, baptism has lost what Seeberg defined as its original New Testament function, to make salvation sure.

Seeberg claims that he simply reversed the New Testament process by applying the objective part of salvation first to the child and then applying the subjective part. But he has done more than simply reverse the order; he has really changed the meaning of the objective part of salvation. In the case of adults, baptism makes such a psychological impression that salvation becomes a permanent possession of the soul. In the case of children, it simply puts salvation at their disposal. It does not really involve their personality as it does with adults. Since confirmation signifies that salvation is firmly established in the consciousness of the child, this rite approximates in its effects what Seeberg has defined as the function of baptism according to the New Testament.

Seeberg is a good example of many in the nineteenth century who realized that New Testament baptism was given to those who had faith and who did not want to resolve the matter by either giving up infant baptism or coming to accept Luther's doctrine of infant faith. To avoid the Charybdis of infant faith, which is for Seeberg impossible, and the Scylla

of giving up infant baptism, which would really mark for him the end of the Volkskirche, Seeberg has invented a concept in which the Sein, the objective part of salvation, is given before the Werden, the subjective part.

It must be said that this position does not resolve his difficulties and only presents new ones. Infant baptism, according to Seeberg, is still a baptism unknown by the New Testament. Now we are faced with the problem of determining how a child can possess the objective part of salvation or that which makes salvation more certain without really possessing salvation itself. It might be possible to talk about the objective and subjective possession of salvation, but in reality such terminology does not correspond to what actually pertains. There is really only one way to possess salvation and that is subjectively through faith. As long as salvation has only an objective existence so far as my person is concerned, it is still not my possession. The same criticism that was leveled against Bunke in the matter of giving the promise to the child without faith can be leveled against Seeberg who attributes to the child some type of objective possession of salvation without faith.

Adolf Schlatter

Adolf Schlatter discusses infant baptism in his Das Christliche Dogma. Like Bunke and Seeberg, Schlatter also wrestles with the same problem of attempting to keep infant baptism an integral part of salvation without coming to an acceptance of the concept of infant faith. Bunke resolved the problem by considering infant baptism as God's personal call of regeneration to the child. Seeberg emphasized infant baptism as God's promise of regeneration or forgiveness to the child. Schlatter attempts to resolve the problem of keeping infant baptism an integral part of salvation

without accepting infant faith by putting a strong emphasis on the grace given in baptism. The child is said to be caught up in grace through baptism before he comes to faith. Between the giving of grace in baptism and the arising of faith there is a considerable lapse of time. Such a separation between the giving of grace in baptism and the arising of faith in the child is said by Schlatter only to be an accurate expression of the fact that grace precedes faith. Another distinctive feature in Schlatter's approach to infant baptism is the strong polemic against Luther's doctrine of infant faith. Quite often the polemic against infant faith found in the nineteenth century writings on baptism is directed specifically against Luther. Schlatter is quite characteristic of this approach.

Baptism

Baptism is said by Schlatter to belong to those acts through which Jesus makes His will and His gifts visible. Through such an act as baptism individuals are united with Christ's congregation. Baptism is also an indication that Christ has given His Gospel both in word and in deed. Connected with baptism is the entire Gospel. There is no one special gift given in baptism. In baptism Christ gives all of His gifts--participation in Christ's death and life, deliverance from sin and flesh, and justification.

In baptism God confronts the individual with the entire power of His Gospel. To God's action in baptism, the baptized is to respond in repentance and faith. For his entire life the baptized is to maintain this attitude of repentance and faith. On this account Schlatter can say that the relationship which the individual has with God in baptism is to be his relationship with God throughout his entire life. Within this

relationship God takes away sin and guilt. Baptism also works positively in that it gives us those things which unite us in fellowship with Christ. Thus Schlatter has categorized the blessings of baptism into two classes. The first class of blessings includes the removing of sin, guilt, and anything which is detrimental to our salvation. The second class works a new relationship with Christ.⁶⁹ Baptism also is said to involve repentance in that it condemns man and places him before God as an unjust individual. But in repentance we should concern ourselves with God's giving us grace rather than with our own unrighteousness. With this grace we can believe and have the certainty of our salvation.

Infant Baptism

Schlatter begins his specific discussion on infant baptism with an examination of Luther's concept of infant faith. It is said by Schlatter that Luther saw from the New Testament that there was an indissoluble connection between faith and baptism. Luther reasoned that if the child were going to have the grace of baptism, he must also have the faith to accept this grace. This faith was created in the child because the congregation implored God to give the child saving faith. Luther did not maintain that the congregation believed vicariously for the child, but that the congregation assisted the child to faith through its prayers. Schlatter claims that by attributing faith to the child Luther was not compelled to delay the child's baptism to a time when he would be more mature. Luther taught that this faith was worked by Christ in the act of

⁶⁹ Adolf Schlatter, Das Christliche Dogma (Calw & Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1911), pp. 456ff.

baptism through the Holy Spirit.⁷⁰

Schlatter disagrees with Luther on his concept of infant faith. Schlatter does not know what the Spirit works in the child. Luther's concept of infant faith is only a conjecture. He claims that Luther used a syllogism⁷¹ in order to give a firmer basis to a concept which did not have too much support. Schlatter recommends to those men called by the church that they should not accept Luther's conjecture about infant faith. Men called by the church should perform their tasks with a good conscience, and a good conscience cannot be based on conjectures. The conjecture of infant faith is said to be dangerous, since the church's concept of faith is at stake. For Schlatter faith is an act of the mind which involves hearing and understanding the preached message. It also involves an act of the will which undergirds the word. Therefore whatever is brought about in children through baptism can have no resemblance to the faith of an adult person. Should an unconscious process in the child be designated as faith, then faith has been emptied of its meaning. In denying infant faith, Schlatter believes that he has protected the concept of faith which is the cornerstone of the church's preaching.⁷²

⁷⁰Ibid., pp. 461ff.

⁷¹It is difficult to say exactly which syllogism of Luther Schlatter has in mind. Schlatter has just mentioned one. Baptism and faith are inseparable in the New Testament. Children are to be baptized. Therefore children have faith. Another possible syllogism which Luther used to establish infant faith was mentioned recently in a theological opinion prepared by the Theologische Fakultät der Martin-Luther-Universität Halle - Wittenberg in response to a request from the Kirchenleitung of Saxony. This is the syllogism. Children are not excluded from salvation. Salvation can only be appropriated in faith. Therefore children can believe. "Votum zur Kindertaufe," Theologische Literaturzeitung, LXXXVII, 11 (November, 1962), 872.

⁷²Schlatter, op. cit., p. 463.

He also condemns the concept that children should be baptized in order to prevent them from going to hell. It is claimed that the fear of hell was a more dominant motive than infant faith in bringing children to baptism. The Augsburg Confession is cited as an example in which the baptism of infants is urged in order to prevent children from going to hell. This confession condemned the Anabaptists for teaching that children were saved without baptism. In this particular point Schlatter agrees with the Anabaptists against the Augsburg Confession. Against using the fear of hell as a motive for baptizing infants, Schlatter says that a baptismal practice cannot be based on fear. Such a motivation is said to be without faith and sinful. We should have no fear concerning unbaptized children. Our faith should be in Christ and not in the water. Even though the water of baptism is lacking, Christ is not lacking. The grace of God is not dead, if the child should die before he receives baptism.⁷³

Schlatter also objects to that concept in which baptism is directed only against original sin. Such a concept is said to make baptism an indispensable sacrament for newborn children. This concept is said to surrender the heritage of the Reformation and to be a contradiction of the New Testament. Schlatter regards baptism as embracing everything sinful in man. If baptism were directed only against original sin, it would become one means of salvation among other means. The efficacy of baptism would have to be complemented by the application of other means of grace and it would become impossible for the individual to reach a permanent state of grace.⁷⁴ This thought is in harmony with what Schlatter has previously said about regarding all the grace of God as the grace of baptism. Outside

⁷³Ibid.,

⁷⁴Ibid., pp. 463f.

of baptism there is no other grace.

He also believes that the matters of infant baptism and the Volkskirche should remain separate issues. On this account he disapproves of the way in which the theologians in Zürich introduced circumcision into the discussion of infant baptism. It is said that these theologians wanted to bind the church and the people to one another. They wanted to christianize the people through the church. They wanted the church and people to be one unit as it was in the Old Testament. Since circumcision was used in the Old Testament for doing this, infant baptism was chosen as the means through which church and people would become united to one another.

Schlatter believes that the Anabaptist controversy arose as a protest against such a union of church and people. The Anabaptists wanted to establish the church on a voluntary basis. Schlatter does not think that it is right to use infant baptism as a means of binding church and people to one another. Even though many problems might arise from the separation of the church from the people, still the correctness of infant baptism should be settled on its own merits. It cannot be maintained simply as a means of continuing the Volkskirche. Baptism must be used for the purpose for which it was instituted. If infant baptism does not fulfill the purposes of baptism, it should not then be maintained for the sake of other benefits such as the Volkskirche.⁷⁵

After this discussion of what he considers to be invalid motives for baptizing children, Schlatter goes on to present what for him are valid motives. He holds that faith is necessary for participation in God's forgiveness and redemption and for fellowship with Christ. A baptism

⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 464f.

which is not confirmed by faith is received in vain. However, the relationship between divine grace and human faith is only properly understood where the priority is given to grace. Grace is first and faith is second. Grace gives and faith takes what grace gives. Grace and faith stand in a cause and effect relationship with one another. Faith is also a limitation on grace in so far as without faith grace remains without effect.⁷⁶

Schlatter condemns the concept that a man must first believe before God is gracious to him. If this were the case, then the individual would create through his own attitude the ability to receive divine grace. In such a case faith would be endangered since it would be misled to rely on itself. Faith would not rely on God Who is the strength of faith. Therefore the Baptist question which asks whether the faith of the candidate for baptism is sufficient can never be answered, since it separates faith from grace. Faith does not consist in measuring our faithfulness through which we then create the grace of God. In infant baptism Schlatter finds an excellent means through which the proper relationship between grace and faith can be expressed. The proper order is that grace precedes and calls forth faith.⁷⁷ This is exactly what happens in infant baptism.

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 465.

⁷⁷Schlatter has emphasized here the importance of divine grace in connection with baptism in order to avoid the necessity of accepting the doctrine of infant faith. A French Protestant theologian, Paul Lobstein, emphasized love in order to accomplish the same thing. He writes: "Er hat uns zuerst geliebt, er ist größer als unser Herz, - er kann sich selbst nicht verleugnen - das ist die dreifache Wahrheit, an die uns die Kindertaufe erinnert, dies selige Unterpand der göttliche Liebe, die sich darin kundgibt und offenbart in ihrem unverdienten Zuorkommen, ihrer königlichen Unabhängigkeit und ihrer unwandelbaren Treue." By emphasizing the love of God, Lobstein wanted to avoid Luther's doctrine of infant faith which was called a fiction, psychologically and morally untenable. Zur Rechtfertigung der Kindertaufe, translated by Pfr. Kupsch (Freiburg i. B. and Leipzig: J. C. B. Mohr, 1895), p. 295.

Theodor Kaftan avoided the doctrine of infant faith by emphasizing

Here God's grace precedes and calls forth faith from the child.⁷⁸

The call of God to faith in baptism does not limit itself to the time of baptism, but it extends over one's entire life time. Schlatter calls Luther's concept of infant faith unnecessary and dangerous since, he says, it compresses the grace of baptism into one moment.⁷⁹ Rather than having only momentary significance, baptism places us under the will of God and is valid for us throughout our entire life. On this account baptism does not have to be repeated, if a person should fall into a period of serious and long unbelief. Baptism is given for all time and through it we know that God does not want to repel us from Himself, but that He wants to receive us in faith. However, as long as a person is without faith, grace cannot become his personal possession. Still in spite of the lack of faith, the grace of God is not unreal. Even though a person resists the grace of God, it does not leave. It stays and attains its purpose when a person comes to faith. In faith the grace of baptism is imparted to us. As already shown, Schlatter dismisses the concept of infant faith as false. Still infant baptism is not an erroneous baptism because faith is lacking. Infant baptism could only be described as erroneous if it could be shown

God's election. He writes: "Das ist ein Verständnis der Taufe der Fülle des Evangeliums heraus. 'Nicht ihr habt mich erwählt, sondern ich habe euch erwählt.' In der Kindertaufe gewinnt die Taufe ihre normale Gestalt." Auslegung des lutherischen Katechismus (Schleswig: Druck und Verlag von Julius Bergas, 1892), p. 344.

⁷⁸Schlatter, op. cit., pp. 465f.

⁷⁹Luther does not teach this. Cf. Harry G. Coiner, "The Inclusive Nature of Holy Baptism in Luther's Writings," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXIII (November, 1962), 645-657.

that children lack the grace of God and that they were excluded by Christ from His congregation. But Schlatter claims that just the opposite is the case. According to the words of Jesus and the universal character of His work and lordship, children are promised the divine grace. Christ Himself is the forgiveness of sins for the entire world and has reconciled the world unto God. In so far as children belong to the world, they belong to those for whom Christ was sent; there is no need to have any anguish over the fate of unbaptized children. In fact the reason for baptizing children is not that they stand outside of God's grace, but because they already stand in it. The dispensing of infant baptism is to be done in connection with the future application of the preached word. Where the possibility of dispensing the word to the child in the future is not present, infant baptism should not be applied. On this account infant baptism should not be carried out in heathen areas. For Schlatter baptism by itself is not a sufficient means of grace. Without the preached word, baptism cannot be the means of grace. On this account the church is obligated to give the child the word as he grows.⁸⁰

Since the dispensing of infant baptism is to be carried out in connection with the future preaching of the word, Schlatter suggests that infant baptism be discontinued where Christian education is no longer possible. If the society has become hostile to Christianity, there is little reason to continue the union of the people and the church in the Volkskirche. At such a time the unity between the church and the people

⁸⁰Schlatter, op. cit., pp. 466f.

would only be a fiction. Therefore the church should never continue with the practice of baptizing infants as if it were indispensable for its existence. If the Volkskirche would ever cease to exist, the situation would be like the Christian church during the time of the Roman Empire when both children and adults were baptized.⁸¹

Seeberg and Schlatter on the Volkskirche

Both Seeberg and Schlatter attach the continuance of infant baptism to the existence of the Volkskirche. If the Volkskirche should cease, infant baptism would also have to be discontinued. But apart from the question of continuing infant baptism, Seeberg and Schlatter disagree on what the relationship between infant baptism and the Volkskirche should be. Seeberg justifies the entire practice of infant baptism within the framework of the Volkskirche. On the other hand, Schlatter believes that they should remain separate issues. For Schlatter the worth of the Volkskirche is that it provides Christian education which must necessarily follow infant baptism. But apart from this, infant baptism and the Volkskirche are to remain separate matters. Seeberg regards both issues as being intimately connected with one another. It might be said that Seeberg regards infant baptism as the baptism of the Volkskirche. Schlatter on the other hand regards infant baptism as a baptism which can be defended in its own right quite apart from the issue of the Volkskirche.

Conclusion

Previously it was mentioned that Schlatter's strong emphasis on grace

⁸¹Ibid., pp. 467f.

was probably the most distinctive element in his discussion of infant baptism. But it is just on this point that Schlatter is most vulnerable to criticism. First of all, he has maintained that every grace is the grace of baptism. Still he does not carry through with this principle, since he claims that faith is an effect of the preached word and not of baptism. If baptism gives every grace, it should also give the grace to believe. This is, of course, denied by Schlatter. Secondly, infant baptism is called a good expression of the priority of grace over faith.⁸² No one would deny that grace is prior to faith and that this would hold true for infant baptism too. However from the priority of grace over faith, Schlatter justifies his conclusion that there be a lapse of time between the giving of grace in baptism and the arising of faith in the child. But in the matter of the personal application of grace, the priority and precedence of grace before faith is a logical sequence and not a temporal one. Secondly in the matter of the objective justification of the world, grace precedes faith temporally by such an extent that it cannot be measured in units of human time. This means that the salvation established before the foundation of the world precedes temporally the faith of any man. However in the matter of personal salvation or subjective justification, grace as a personal possession does not temporally precede faith. The possession of salvation presupposes faith. Thus when Schlatter says that infant baptism is an expression of the priority of grace over faith, this might be true so far as the objective justification of the world is concerned; but it is not true so far as personal salvation is concerned.

⁸²None of the three men discussed in this chapter have made any comments on the baptismal rite. Such comments are frequently helpful in understanding a theological position. In order to overcome this lack here, a few remarks about an article by Johannes Bauer, professor of practical

In maintaining that infant baptism can be justified by the concept that grace precedes faith, Schlatter is confusing objective and subjective justification. In objective justification grace precedes faith temporally; but in subjective justification grace only precedes faith logically. There is no lapse of time between the personal possession of grace and faith.

A third objection against Schlatter's concept of infant baptism is his claim that children are baptized because they already stand in grace, and because they belong to those for whom Christ and the Spirit were sent. Schleiermacher rightly protests against such reasoning. He says that if children already stand in grace, there is no necessity to baptize them. In addition he says that if we baptize them because they belong to those for whom Christ died, we should also on the same account baptize all men upon whom we can lay our hands.⁸³ Here again Schlatter has confused

theology at the University of Heidelberg, will be included. Like Schlatter and Bunke, Bauer can no longer accept Luther's doctrine of infant faith. Since the child is not to be baptized on the basis of his own faith, he suggests that either the Apostles' Creed no longer be used in the rite of infant baptism or that infant baptism be given up. Here follows the pertinent portion. "Die Einwände, die man heute gegen den K i n d e r- g l a u b e n und gegen die damit zusammenhängende Stellung des Glaubensbekenntnis erhebt, sind unwiderlegbar, und auch lutherische Theologen der Gegenwart haben die Position Luthers aufgegeben; sie widerspricht der evangelischen Auffassung des Glaubens als eigener persönlicher Entscheidung und als einer inneren Bestimmtheit und Erfahrung des seelischen Lebens. Und ja höher man die W i r k u n g der Taufe stellt, je mehr man geneigt ist, die objektive Kraft des Sakraments und seine Unabhängigkeit vom menschlichen Glauben zu betonen, um so schwieriger ist die Annahme eines irgendwie vor der Taufe vorhandenen oder hervorgerufenen Kinderglaubens oder eines stellvertretenden Glaubens durch die Paten. - Dabei ist es völlig einerlei, ob man das Glaubensbekenntnis einschränkt, ob man nur das Bekenntnis zu Vater, Sohn, und Geist, vorausschickt; die Formel 'a u f d a s B e k e n n t n i s t a u f e n' d. h. 'a u f G r u n d e i n e s d e m K i n d i r g e n d w i e z u g e s c h r i e b e n e n G l a u b e n s t a u f e n,' lässt sich bei der evangelischen Kindertaufe nicht aufrecht erhalten - oder man muss die Kindertaufe selbst aufschaffen." Johannes Bauer, "Bekenntnis und Kindertaufe," Christliche Welt XXVII, (1913), 209. Like Schlatter, Bauer has so emphasized grace that there is no need for faith in the child.

⁸³Schleiermacher, op. cit., p. 384.

objective and subjective justification. Just because children belong to those for whom Christ and the Spirit were sent does not mean that they are personally saved. Actually the Scriptures attribute personal salvation only to those who have faith, not to all who are included in Christ's work of redemption. All the world has been included in His redemption, but this does not mean that everyone is personally saved. The mere fact that children are included in Christ's work of redemption does not mean that they automatically should be baptized. Schlatter's strong emphasis on grace is further seen in that he says that we should have no fear concerning children who die without baptism because they already stand in God's grace. If such a thought were carried out to its logical consequences, baptism would really become superfluous for children in so far as personal salvation is concerned.

Schlatter also objects to that concept which separates original sin from the total sinfulness of man and which considers baptism as the means of grace which is directed against original sin. Such a concept is said by Schlatter to make baptism indispensable for newborn children. Here Schlatter is guilty of a logical error. He is correct when he says that baptism is directed to the entire sinful nature of man and not just original sin. But on this account baptism would also be directed against original sin. If children do have original sin, then it is absolutely necessary that baptism or some other means of grace be given them so that they can be saved. One can use the same data as Schlatter does and come to the opposite conclusion. If baptism is directed to the total sinfulness of man, it would also be directed to every part of this sinfulness. Therefore it would also be directed against original sin. On this account children should be baptized.

A similar objection can be raised when Schlatter says that Luther's concept of faith is both unnecessary and damaging, since it compresses the effects of baptism into the actual moment of the act. Schlatter says that baptism is to be valid for the entire life and not just for one moment of it. If Schlatter is right when he says that baptism is valid for our entire life, then one can come to a conclusion exactly opposite from Schlatter's. If baptism is valid for the entire life, it is then also valid for the time of infancy. Should baptism really be valid for infancy, Luther's concept of infant faith would be quite necessary and edifying. It would be necessary, since as Schlatter himself admits the benefits of baptism can only really be enjoyed in faith.

Schlatter is a good example of those theologians who wanted to keep infant baptism in God's plan of salvation for the individual, without accepting the doctrine of infant faith. It is true that he has emphasized grace, but unfortunately he did so by eliminating faith from any role in the salvation of children.

Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction of this chapter Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter embodied in their understanding of infant baptism concepts previously found at the beginning of the century in the writings of Wegscheider, Reinhard, and Schleiermacher. What needs special consideration here is the new dimension added to their concepts of baptism.

The new dimension is that even though baptism does not effect any change in the child, still baptism has personal significance for the salvation of the child in the future. By projecting the personal significance of infant baptism into the future, they attempted to resolve two basic

premises from which they worked. The first principle is that baptism has significance for salvation in connection with faith. The second is that infants do not believe.⁸⁴ That baptism was to have future significance for the child's salvation was expressed variously. Bunke called infant baptism the personal call of God. Such a phrase contains the element of the future, since the child did not answer this call until he came to faith at a more mature age. Seeberg said that infant baptism was the promise of regeneration and forgiveness. The word promise also has future connotation. Schlatter described infant baptism as an excellent expression of the fact that grace precedes faith. In this description the idea of the future is also contained. All of these phrases express the same basic concept that grace is present for the child long before he comes to faith.⁸⁵ There was a lapse of time between the giving

⁸⁴One of the more interesting attempts to solve the problem caused by the infant's lack of faith at the time of baptism was provided by a theologian simply known by his last name, Kalchreuter. In order to bridge the tension caused by "1) ohne Glauben keine Taufe (kein Sakrament); 2) kein Glauben bei Säugling," he says that the faith of the infant's father can be substituted for the infant's faith. He writes: "Ist nun aber nach dem Obigen ein Glaube der Kinder unmöglich und doch die Beschneidung der Kinder eine göttliche sanctionirte Ordnung, so werden wir schon hier auf den einzig möglichen Ausweg hingewiesen, der uns auch bei dem Institut der Kindertaufe allein übrig bleibt, nämlich die Statuirung der fides aliena und zwar des Hausvaters, der einstweilen für das Kind eintrat." "Der stellvertretende Glaube und die Kindertaufe," Jahrbücher für deutsche Theologie, XI (Drittes Heft, 1866), 533.

Kalchreuter claims that his concept is built on the unity and solidarity of the family, the congregation, the people, and the church on one side, and the lack of faith in the infant on the other side. Ibid., p. 536. Just as the life of the child is potentially in the mother, so the faith of the child is potentially in the parents. Ibid., p. 542. Against such a position it must be asked whether faith can be potentially present in parents who are hypocrites. Kalchreuter's position is very similar to that of the Roman Catholic doctrine which teaches that children are baptized on the faith of the church or fides aliena.

⁸⁵Theodor Kaftan tried to mediate between the ideas that only in faith can salvation be received and that children have no faith by saying

of grace in baptism and the arising of faith through the preached word.

The problem which arises with this concept is to determine how these children, who have been offered grace through baptism, but who still have no faith, stand in relation to salvation. Traditionally within the Lutheran Church there are two categories which are valid for all men. Either a man is a believer or he is an unbeliever. The former has the hope of salvation and the latter does not. But in the concept of baptism which we have before us, we are faced with three categories. The new category seems to be for children who have been offered grace through baptism, but who still have not accepted this grace through faith. We are given to understand that children in this condition are to be considered saved even if they should die before they come to faith. This thought is explicit in Schlatter who says that we should not fear concerning children who die without baptism. Certainly if children are saved without baptism, they are also saved with baptism. This thought is made implicit in Bunke and Seeberg, since neither of them speaks of the damnation of baptized children. It can be safely said that these men believed that baptized children were saved even though they had not yet come to faith. But in so doing, they have really contradicted their own principle in which faith played such an important role. All of these men taught that regeneration came about only when the child came to faith; nevertheless they all taught that the child was in the state of grace and was saved without faith. They taught that baptized children were saved as they waited for faith. In maintaining that children were saved without faith, they established a third category alongside of the traditional two of belief and unbelief.

If the reasons which are offered by these men for infant baptism are

that children were led on the road to faith. "Das geschieht, indem unter uns nur solche Kinder getauft werden, von denen wir wissen, dass sie in ihrem Heranwachsen den Weg zum Glauben werden geführt d.h. christlich erzogen werden. Op. cit., p. 344. Of course this does not solve the tension. A person on the road to faith is still without faith.

examined closely, it will be seen that baptism really does not affect the salvation of the child. In fact baptism could be omitted without seriously affecting the child. This is most evident in Schlatter's position where he says that we baptize children because they already stand in grace. Bunke says that baptism is the seal of the call which the child already possesses through his birth. Seeberg expresses a similar thought by saying that the birth of a child into a Christian environment gives him the permanent possession of Christianity (Sein). Since the birth of the child gives him these blessings, baptism really does not give the child anything uniquely new. Baptism can only confirm what the child has already through birth. But certainly the actual giving of the blessings is more important than their being confirmed. The only significant role that infant baptism can play in bringing salvation to the child is in the area of future faith and regeneration. However, at the actual time of baptism, the child is given nothing new. Baptism is the call to regeneration, but at the time of the baptism the call is without effect on the child. When regeneration does come to the child, it will not be the call in baptism which brings it about. It will be the preached word and not baptism which brings about faith and regeneration. That baptism by itself is ineffective as a means of grace on the child is evident in that a guarantee concerning the application of the preached word must be given. The word is not present in infant baptism and therefore it cannot be active in creating faith in the child. Only in the preaching can that word be found which creates faith.

It cannot be doubted that Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter made a serious attempt to regard infant baptism as an integral part of personal salvation.⁸⁶

⁸⁶There is very little secondary material on the doctrine of infant baptism as it was taught by Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter. Nothing is

However, when their concepts concerning infant baptism have been carefully examined, it must be said that it really is a superfluous rite so far as the present and to some extent also the future salvation of the child is concerned. Its application does not give anything new to the child and its lack does not deprive the child of anything. It is said by all three theologians that infant baptism has significance for the future life of faith. However, it is not so much baptism which has significance as it is the preached word.

included in the second and third editions of Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart. The third edition of Realencyklopädie appeared at the same time in which Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter wrote. Even though Kattenbusch does not mention any of these men, he does mention the position of Kähler, Gottschick, and Scheel. R. Seeberg, it seems, identifies his position with that of Bunke and Kähler. Cf. footnote #1. What Kattenbusch says in his article "Taufe. II. Kirchenlehre" concerning Kähler, Gottschick, and Scheel, applies also to Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter.

"Dem Kinde wird es, darauf rechnet die Gemeinde, zu seiner Zeit zum Bewusstsein kommen, was es heize, im Leben unter einem gnädigen Gott zu stehen, von Beginn des Lebens an in diesen Gott 'getauft' zu sein. Wer die Bibel und was Christus gesagt und 'Verordnet' hat, nicht als Gesetz, sondern als Evangelium versteht, weiss, dass die Taufe nicht als 'bedingter Grund' der Gnadenzuwendung Gottes gedeutet werden darf. Er versteht es aber, dass sie als ein spezifischer Moment in dieser gewertet werden darf. Denn es ist nur ein Ausdruck dafür, dass wir Gott lebendig als Person empfinden, wenn wir ihn und seine Gnade im konkreten Momente zu sehen vermögen, ja darin suchen." F. [erdinand] Kattenbusch, "Taufe. II. Kirchenlehre," Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, edited by Albert Hauck (Dritte verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1907), XIX, 424.

CHAPTER VI

PAUL ALTHAUS AND HERMANN CREMER

Introduction

Near the turn of the last century when Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter were expressing their views on baptism as a call and promise to the child, Paul Althaus, Sr., and Hermann Cremer wrote their monographs on baptism.

With Althaus and Cremer a new concept not found before in the nineteenth century came into the understanding of baptism. They taught that the application of baptism gave complete regeneration. Althaus termed this concept Taufwiedergeburt and claimed that it was the correct understanding of the New Testament doctrine of baptism. Taufwiedergeburt was solely an act of God which did not involve any change in the person. It was something that happened apart from man. Through Taufwiedergeburt God gives all the blessings of salvation to man, including justification and faith. Faith did not belong to Taufwiedergeburt but was a result of it.

Since faith was not necessary to receive Taufwiedergeburt, children who could not believe still were able to participate in it. When faith arose in the child, it did not bring any new blessings to the child. All blessings came from and through baptism and not through faith. Faith arose in the child at a time when his consciousness would be able to deal with the preached word. This faith was the response of the child to the regeneration which he had as a possession from baptism.

There were no theologians who so strongly emphasized the objective character of baptism as did Althaus and Cremer. Baptism was not only

objective according to its nature, but also according to its effects. What baptism worked, it worked completely independently of any change within its object.¹

Paul Althaus, Sr.

Paul Althaus authored two books on baptism. The first book was given first as a lecture and then published in 1893 under the title of Die historischen und dogmatischen Grundlagen der Lutherischen Tauf liturgie.²

The second work was exegetical in character and endeavored to present the New Testament concept of baptism. It appeared in 1897 under the title of Die Heilsbedeutung der Taufe im Neuen Testamente.³ Even though this work never handles the question of infant baptism specifically, it is very valuable, because of the concept of regeneration which it presents.

Althaus views regeneration as an act of God done to man. Regeneration as an act of God does not involve faith or any change on man's part. While there is no specific section on the baptism of infants, it is said in the introduction of the book that the New Testament does not deal with different

¹ Cf. F [erdinand] Kattenbusch, "Taufe. II. Kirchenlehre," Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche, edited by Albert Hauck (Dritte verbesserte und vermehrte Auflage; Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs'sche Buchhandlung, 1907), XIX, 423. This conclusion that there is no change within the child is also supported by Kattenbusch. He writes: "Eine sittliche Erneuerung, eine subjektive Veränderung unserer Beschaffenheit ist die Taufe nicht. Ebendeshalb ist sie als Kindertaufe genau das gleiche wie als Erwachsenentaufe. In dem Mass als dem Menschen (Kinde) zum Bewusstsein kommt, was Gott an ihm gethan, erwacht der (Heils-) Glaube und mit ihm die sittliche Kraft und Lust." Kattenbusch in his survey of the nineteenth century places Cremer and Althaus in the same category and calls them the Konstruktionen. Of them, he says, "die Taufe bedeutet eine aktuelle Wiedergeburt."

² Hannover: Verlag von Heinr. Feesche, 1893.

³ Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1897.

types of baptism, one for adults and one for children.⁴ It can thus be concluded that what is said about baptism may be applied to both adults and children.

An effect of baptism is that we die and rise with Christ. The dying and rising with Christ effected by baptism is not to be considered an ethical dying to sin or an ethical resurrection. Rather the dying and rising with Christ are to be considered acts of God's grace, through which the baptized actually and personally participates in the death and resurrection of Jesus. As the Messiah He brought about the redemption through these acts. Like the dying and rising with Christ, man's regeneration is not to be understood as an ethical renewing. Rather regeneration is to be understood as an act of God's saving activity through which He gives salvation to those who have been baptized. On account of regeneration, those who have been baptized are rescued from their former condition of imprisonment under death and they are made to participate in the life created by Christ.⁵ Althaus calls baptism the bath of regeneration because according to its essence it takes away the guilt of the individual on the basis of the redemptive work of Christ. It is the bath that has been prepared by the prevenient grace of God. By virtue of the redemptive work in baptism we are placed into the fellowship of salvation. Althaus denounces those concepts of regeneration which maintain that in baptism regeneration is incomplete, or that it is made possible, or that it is only

⁴Ibid., p. ix. "Das Neue Testament rechnet mit den unterschiedlichen Arten der Erwachsenentaufe und der Kindertaufe nicht."

⁵Ibid., p. 256.

signified and symbolized. Such concepts are said by Althaus to be derived from the false understanding of regeneration ($\pi\lambda\lambda\alpha\gamma\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\sigma\tau\acute{\alpha}$) as an ethical restoration of the individual. For Althaus that understanding of regeneration involving an ethical change in the individual is a fundamental error. When this error is discarded the New Testament doctrine of baptism will be recognized as the Pauline concept of regeneration through baptism (Taufwiedergeburt). To say that regeneration happens through baptism means that baptism is the sacramental means ordained by God through which He appropriates salvation to the individual. Through baptism the individual is placed into a personal relationship with the God of salvation. By virtue of this relationship created through baptism, the will of God to save the world becomes for the baptized person the particular will of God to save him. It is through baptism that the objective redemption which is available for the entire world becomes the personal possession of the individual.⁶ For Althaus baptism is that act through which God works regeneration. To be regenerated means to be saved from the condemnation of death and to participate in Christ's life. Through baptism the objective justification becomes the subjective possession of the individual.⁷ Before a critique is made of Althaus's concept of Taufwiedergeburt, it is necessary to see how he expresses himself on the matters of infant baptism and faith.

⁶Ibid., p. 257.

⁷Ibid., p. 300.

Althaus calls the bestowal of faith in baptism and the ethical conversion resulting from it magic and erroneous opinions of the dogmaticians.⁸ He objects to both Luther's and Quenstedt's concepts that children believe through their baptism. Althaus realizes that for Quenstedt's infant faith was unlike the full and conscious faith of adults. Infant faith was not the fides reflexa. However, Althaus says that infant faith was provided with so many attributes that it could not really be distinguished from a faith which was self-conscious and active. To ascribe such a faith to children really disregarded the children's nature, Luther is to blame for what Althaus called the hypothesis of infant faith. He mentions that Luther first believed that faith was given before the act of baptism. Later Luther changed his opinion to maintain that faith was given right in the baptism.⁹ Concerning the concept of infant faith as held by Luther and Quenstedt, Althaus remarks that the New Testament knows nothing of it.¹⁰ That the doctrine of infant faith is denied by Althaus follows naturally from his understanding of faith. If infant faith were maintained, it would be contradictory to what Althaus believes God requires first of the individual before He creates faith. Before God can give a new will, a new nature, and a new disposition, He requires that the individual actively and consciously participate with Him. If God did not require such activity, He would be ignoring the individual's personal freedom and his ethical personality.¹¹ Since Althaus regards a personally conscious and active

⁸Ibid., p. 308.

⁹Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 296.

¹¹Ibid., p. 309.

participation as a requirement for God's creation of faith, it can be seen why he says that the doctrine of infant faith as understood by Luther and Quenstedt is unknown to the New Testament.

To understand Althaus's entire concept of baptism, it is necessary to see how he relates baptism to adult faith. The faith of an adult before baptism is to be considered a gift of God. However, it is not saving faith. Faith does not effect anything so far as baptism is concerned.¹² When baptism is given, the faith which existed before baptism becomes a faith which receives and holds salvation. What faith desired before baptism it receives in baptism.¹³ Faith cannot bring or add anything to baptism. It can only receive and make use of that which is given once and for all in baptism. Baptism demands that faith follows, but faith is not required in order that baptism may become effective. Faith is the organum leptikon, by which baptism can subjectively come into force.¹⁴

Even though Althaus does not specifically say what infant baptism works in children, enough material is given to determine what happens and what does not happen to infants in baptism. It may be concluded that baptism does work regeneration as Althaus defines it, with all of its accompanying benefits for children. This is deduced from Althaus's concept of the nature and effect of baptism and from his concept of knowing only one baptism which is valid for both adults and children. Secondly, we know that Althaus does not believe that faith is created in children through

¹²Ibid., p. 298.

¹³Ibid., p. 303.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 308ff.

baptism. Therefore Althaus teaches a regeneration of children through baptism before and apart from faith.

It is clear that in Althaus's understanding of the plan of salvation baptism has become that means through which man receives salvation, and thus it has taken the place of faith to some extent. No one will contest that God gives salvation to man through baptism. However, baptism is God's means of giving salvation and it is not man's means of accepting. Faith is the only means through which man applies salvation to himself. It is faith that makes objective justification a personal possession and not baptism, as Althaus maintains. If baptism did make objective justification the subjective possession of those who received this sacrament, then it would have to be concluded that an unbeliever who had been baptized had been subjectively justified. By maintaining that regeneration does not have to do with any ethical change in man, Althaus is making regeneration a thing which has an objective existence apart from the disposition of the one who possesses it. If regeneration does not have to do with the ethical condition of the individual, it is possible for an unbeliever to have it. It can be seen that there would be no difficulty in attributing regeneration to children who cannot believe, since regeneration does not involve any ethical change in the one who receives it. The order of salvation as held by Althaus may be viewed as grace, baptism, personal salvation, and last of all faith. Faith is not the channel through which baptism works, but it is a product of regeneration given in baptism. Saving faith is not the prerequisite for regeneration, but regeneration is the prerequisite for saving faith. The blessings which God gives do not come through faith, but through the regeneration which is given in baptism. Althaus does say that baptism comes into force subjectively through faith; however baptism has a personal saving effect apart from faith. By saying

that baptism is brought into subjective force through faith, Althaus means that through faith the person becomes conscious of what baptism has done to him and then he can live accordingly. However, even apart from baptism coming subjectively into force through faith, baptism can bring about regeneration. With the exaltation of baptism in the plan of salvation, the preached word has been degraded. Of itself the preached word cannot produce saving faith in its hearer. It is baptism that gives faith its saving quality.

There is no doubt that Althaus in saying that baptism works regeneration without the ethical participation of the individual teaches extreme objective operation of baptism in regard to salvation. God works regeneration in the individual apart from his ethical condition. The subjective personality is not involved. However, when it comes to the creation of faith Althaus has completely reversed himself. He says that if God created faith in the individual without his active and conscious participation it would be a violation of the person's freedom and ethical personality. On the one hand God gives salvation to the individual apart from his ethical disposition and on the other hand God does not create faith without his active participation, because it would be a disregarding of his ethical personality. Althaus is as synergistic in his concept of the creation of faith as he is extremely monergistic in the bestowal of salvation. It is only because he has separated the giving of salvation from faith that he can be monergistic in the former and synergistic in the latter. Althaus's concept of Taufwiedergeburt also appears in the writings of Hermann Cremer, who applied this concept specifically to children.

Hermann Cremer

Introduction

Just at the turn of the last century and shortly before his death in 1903, Hermann Cremer wrote his monographs on baptism. The first appeared in 1899 under the title of Wesen und Wirkung der Taufe.¹⁵ In 1900 he wrote his Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe as a response to Johannes Lepsius who criticized his work of 1899.¹⁶ Again in 1901, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, was published in an enlarged edition.¹⁷ The 1901 edition was virtually a different book from the 1900 one both in regard to the size and to some extent to the content. These two editions of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe present a puzzle in that it appears that in the first Cremer denies infant faith and in the second he accepts it. That Cremer's position on infant faith was not constant is reflected in what various theologians said about it. Both Ernst Bunke¹⁸ and Reinhold

¹⁵Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1899. Hereafter cited as Wesen und Wirkung.

¹⁶Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe in Kraft des Heiligen Geistes (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1900), pp. 3ff. Hereafter cited as Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1900.

¹⁷The first edition had seventy-six pages and the second had one-hundred and sixty-five. It was more than double in length. Hermann Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe in Kraft des Heiligen Geistes (Zweite, völlig neubearbeitete Auflage; Gütersloh, 1901). References to this second edition shall be cited from the third edition published posthumously by son Ernst Cremer. The third edition does not differ from the second. Herman Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe in Kraft des Heiligen Geistes, edited by Ernst Cremer (Dritte unveränderte Auflage; Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1917). Hereafter this edition shall be cited as Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1901-1917.

¹⁸Bunke writes: "Aber dass die Kindertaufe die Wiedergeburt sei, muss anders bewiesen werden. Obirings müssen wir festfallen, dass nach

Seeberg¹⁹ were of the opinion that Cremer did not teach infant faith. Karl Brinkel, on the other hand, in his brief overview of what the theologians of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have said about infant faith, claims that Cremer did come to accept infant faith.²⁰

The discrepancy can be best explained by an apparent change in Cremer's own attitude. In his works of 1899 and 1900 he explicitly denied infant faith, and in 1901 it appears that he did come to accept some type of infant faith. When Bunke criticized Cremer he had the works of 1899 and 1900 at his disposal. Seeberg had these in addition to the one of 1901. Brinkel refers to the one of 1901. Since there appears to be a change in Cremer's position on infant faith between 1900 and 1901, it becomes necessary to examine the two editions of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Taufe in order to see whether or not there was a change in his position.

Cremer zur Erlangung der Tauf=Wiedergeburt=Rechtfertigung ein minderwärtiger Glaube ausreichend ist, den man dem Glauben nach der Taufe (das ist doch dann der seligmachende Glaube) nicht gleichsetzen darf. Ob die Kinder wenigstens diesen minderwärtigen Glauben haben, ist hier nicht ausdrücklich behauptet." Lehrstreit über die Kindertaufe (Kassel: n.p., 1900) pp. 59f.

He further says: "Luther hatte sich die Wiedergeburt in der Kindertaufe gesichert, dass er den Heilsglauben der Kinder behauptete. . . . Cremer hat diese Aufnahme aufgegeben." Ibid., p. 62.

¹⁹Seeberg writes: "Andere wieder verdünnten den Begriff der Wiedergeburt so, dass er identisch wurde mit dem Begriff der Rechtfertigung (so Ritschl und Cremer). Dann handelte es sich nicht mehr darum bei der Taufe, dass dem Kinde ein neues Leben geschenkt werde (Cremer). Den 'Kinderglauben' konnte man bei dieser Anschauung beiseite schieben, aber man kam doch zu keiner deutlichen Aussage darüber, was denn die Taufe eigentliche gebe. Man sagte, die Rechtfertigung, aber diese ist doch nur dort wirksam, wo sie im Glauben erfasst, und Glaube war eben nicht da." Zur Systematischen Theologie (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1909), p. 257.

²⁰Brinkel writes: "Der Bibliist Wilhelm Cremer kam auch zur Annahme eines Kinderglaubens bei der Kindertaufe. Dieser Glaube werde bei der Taufe im Kind durch göttliche Segnung gewirkt, und sei 'so lange in

Hermann Cremer's position in the 1900 edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe

This work contains the same basic thoughts as the much smaller Wesen und Wirkung der Taufgnade of 1899. The most unique concept of the 1900 work is that complete baptismal regeneration in children is taught even though they are not able to come to faith.

It is necessary first to understand Cremer's basic understanding of infant baptism. For him infant baptism must be either a real baptism which of necessity involves the washing away of sins, regeneration, and a renewal of the Holy Spirit or it is not baptism. A third possibility does not exist.²¹ This regeneration given by baptism consists of the pardoning grace of God (Begnadigung) and the forgiveness of sins. To be regenerated in baptism means that through the forgiveness of sins life is given anew and the individual is released from sin and judgment. Through grace and forgiveness we come into the possession of eternal life.²² Such a concept of regeneration does not involve faith.²³ If regeneration by definition does not involve faith, the way is open for Cremer to attribute regeneration to children who are said not to be capable of faith.

der Begnadigung eingeschlossen, bis er zeigt, wenn das Erkennen, das Bewusstsein sich zeige." Die Lehre Luthers von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufe (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), p. 105.

²¹ Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1900, p. 15.

²² Ibid., p. 32.

²³ In the 1901 edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, Cremer included a chapter entitled "Die Notwendigkeit des Glaubens" (pp. 93-112). This chapter did not appear in the first edition published in 1900. The

Important in Cremer's scheme of salvation is the primacy of the grace present in baptism over faith. This is evident in that before children accept and believe in salvation, it is available for them as their own possession. Faith is not a condition for receiving grace, but faith is created by grace. That faith is worked by grace is substantiated by a reference to the conversion of three thousand on Pentecost. It was not the preaching of Peter that created saving faith in their hearts, but it was baptism. Only after the hearers of Peter's sermon had been baptized could they say that they had experienced the grace of God. Such an experience could not be produced by the preached word alone. This reference proves for Cremer that in baptism grace becomes the personal possession of the individual. Cremer says that lack of faith in children does not prevent their being baptized. He reasons that there is no one time which is perfectly suited for the reception of baptism. At no time are we capable of making the decision to believe. The time for being baptized cannot be the time of penitence, since penitence remains a task for our entire life. Baptism should not be administered only at the time of death, since it would support the false concept that baptism is directed at those sins only that have been committed before the reception of baptism.²⁴

Cremer's unwritten but nevertheless obvious conclusion is that since there is no one time perfectly suited for receiving baptism, it may be received

inclusion of a special chapter dealing with the necessity of faith might indicate that faith had become a part of Cremer's definition of regeneration.

²⁴ Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1900, pp. 61f.

during the time of infancy as well as any other time.

Cremer does believe that children have faith (Glauben der Kinder). He criticizes Ritschl for claiming that faith is possible only at a mature age. Cremer maintains that it is possible for children to have justifying faith. The faith of children is described as a faith that grasps the Savior and that prays the Lord's Prayer. He calls it an evil thing to speak about the impossibility of children's having faith (die Unmöglichkeit des Glaubens der Kinder). Here Cremer is speaking in defense of children's faith and not infant faith. This is evident in that he goes on to say that children are still not able to believe (die Kinder noch nicht glauben können). Since children are not capable of believing, faith cannot be directly produced in them by any means. Infant children are said neither to know nor to be able to know anything about God and the world. Cremer does not want to have anything to do with infant faith and he is not willing to go back to the concepts of previous times. Undoubtedly the concepts of the previous times are Luther's and the Lutheran Orthodox doctrine of infant faith. For Cremer the problem connected with infant baptism is not infant faith. This he has already declared an impossibility. The problem for him is whether or not children who cannot believe can receive baptism.²⁵ It should be noted that Cremer believes in Kinderglauben in so far as this term refers to children coming to faith through the preached word. On the other hand he denies Kinderglauben in

²⁵Ibid., pp. 63f. Already the year before in Wesen und Wirkung Cremer denied infant faith by calling it a fiction. He says, "Sollen wir denn wirklich mit der Fiktion des 'Glaubens der Kinder' rechnen müssen?" Wesen und Wirkung, p. 15.

so far as this term refers to infants believing on account of their being baptized. The problems of interpreting the term Kinderglauben will be discussed in the critique at the end of this section. It should be noted here that both baptized children without faith and baptized children with faith, have regeneration and justification from their baptism.

Cremer then goes on to present his views on which children are to receive baptism and which children are not to receive it. This question of which children are to receive baptism is not to be decided on the sinfulness of the children alone. If children were to be baptized alone on account of their sinfulness, then the children of Jews and heathen should be baptized along with the children of Christians. However, we have the right and duty to give baptism only to those children who are born within Christendom. It is to these children that we are to give baptism so that through our Christian service and through the power of the Holy Spirit they may receive what they need to be saved. The right of the children of Christians to receive baptism, a right the children of heathen do not have, consists in their close relationship to God's salvation on account of their birth. Through this advantage of Christian children, they can come more easily and more quickly to faith than the children of the heathen. From the very beginning the children of Christians have a place in the Christian congregation and thus they come under the influence of God's word.²⁶ Therefore the question of who is to receive baptism is to be answered not by the child's need for forgiveness, but by the child's birth.

In this same connection, Cremer's definition of the essence of the church is important. The church is defined as the place where God is

²⁶ Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1900, pp. 65ff.

present or where he dwells in the Spirit. It is in the church that the supernatural blessings of God are available and here God is effective through the Spirit Who wants to gain the world and to make it participate in the redemption. Since children are born within the church, they are born within that sphere where the Spirit is effective. From the very beginning children stand under grace. Grace is not merely intended for them, but it actually belongs to them. Through their birth the children of Christians are called and chosen. Over these children hovers the grace of forgiveness and not merely the patience of God which hovers over the Jews and heathen. Even before the children of Christians come to belief, the grace of God is imparted to them. Before they have faith, they are upheld by grace, so that from the very beginning they grow up into faith. The consciousness of Christian children does not need to develop into the consciousness of faith. There is never a time of decision for them. Rather as the conscious life of the child unfolds, it is already the conscious life of faith. In giving baptism to children, it is presupposed that their life will become a life of faith. That baptism and faith belong together follows necessarily from the connection between the word and baptism. The faith consciousness of the child will be dependent for its content on the faith of the parents and the congregation into which the child was born. Undoubtedly faith consciousness is a reference to the faith that comes through the word. This faith consciousness which the child receives from his parents is his consciousness over his own election and adoption by God. It does not involve a mental reflection of everything which belongs to this adoption. As soon as the child has faith, this faith grasps this consciousness and joins it to baptism. This process is done in such a way that it cannot be known at which time

or in which way it has taken place.²⁷

Cremer comes now to handle the problem of determining whether the will of the child is abused in his being baptized. For him the baptizing of infants is not to be considered an act of force against their will. Rather their being baptized is to be considered an advantage just as was their birth into Christendom. Being born into Christendom makes coming to faith easier and being baptized is the actual creation of faith. Only when a baptized child renounces or gives up faith does such a child come under the condemnation of God.²⁸

Cremer is quite positive in defining infant baptism as the bath of regeneration and as the renewing in the Holy Spirit, because in baptism the child is given his life anew and he is saved from death, judgment, and destruction. That the child does not have any knowledge about his salvation does not mean that he does not possess it. If baptized children do not come to faith, they lose what their baptism gave them. Since children are called, justified, and reborn in baptism, their not coming to faith is called a falling away or an experiencing of the second death. The warnings of the New Testament about falling away apply to those baptized as children because they have been baptized.²⁹ It should be noted here that Cremer is speaking of falling away from the grace of baptism and not from faith. Even if a child who has been baptized never comes to

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 68ff.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 72.

²⁹ Ibid., pp. 72f.

faith, his refusal to come to faith is called a falling away. It is evident that this is not a falling away from faith, since faith in some cases has never existed.

What the church does in carrying out the ordinances of the Lord and for the purpose of appropriating salvation, it does in the power of the Spirit. Since the church in baptizing children is acting in accordance with the ordinances of the Lord and is appropriating salvation, it is acting in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus in baptism the Spirit is active in appropriating to the child the eternal grace of the Triune God, the eternal redemption, and the eternal forgiveness of sins. In baptism the child is justified and sanctified. From the very beginnings of faith in the child, he can trust on all those graces given him in baptism.³⁰

Since through baptism the child does not have the knowledge involved in faith, it is very important that everything be done to insure that such a baptized child come to such knowledge. As shown previously, the children of the heathen could not be baptized, because they would not be brought up under the influence of the word which is active within Christendom. Therefore it follows only naturally that Cremer should suggest that baptism should be refused to those children who are born of parents who oppose Christianity or where the guarantee for providing a Christian education cannot be given. In such a situation the child is said not to be an object of the divine election. Cremer will grant that the child can later become an object of election. That he was refused baptism can be a blessing and will not be a hindrance for him. In order to determine which parents are fit to have their children baptized, Cremer suggests that the congregations become much smaller. In this way the members of the congregation will be

³⁰Ibid., pp. 73f.

more easily known. Unless this is done, it will be impossible to have a sincere and blessed dispensation of the sacrament of baptism.³¹

The concept of baptism in Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1900, is no different from the concept in Wesen und Wirkung der Taufgnade, 1899. However in the 1900 work the concepts connected with baptism are handled more extensively and they are more clearly set forth. There are three concepts connected with baptism that are held by Cremer which were already found in Schleiermacher and the other theologians handled in the second and third chapters. First of all faith comes only through the preached word. Secondly infants do not have faith. Thirdly as long as children do not come to faith through the preached word their baptism is incomplete. Each of these points will need clarification, since in some places it might appear that Cremer contends for the exact opposite position.

Cremer does call faith an effect (Wirkung) of baptism. When he calls faith an effect of baptism, he is referring to saving faith. It is baptism that gives saving quality to faith. This was seen when Cremer said that the listeners of Peter's sermon on Pentecost experienced the mercy of God only after baptism. Before their baptism they did have the knowledge involved in faith from Peter's sermon. Baptism of itself does not communicate to the person the knowledge of Him on Whom he should believe. This only comes from the preached word. That baptism in Cremer's opinion does not work faith is further indicated by his claim that inarticulate children do not believe through their baptism. Cremer's belief that baptism is incapable of creating faith is quite clearly seen in his statement that

³¹Ibid., p. 75.

the content of a child's faith consciousness comes from the parents and the congregation. This idea is derived according to Cremer from the connection between the word and baptism. If baptism did give the content of faith consciousness to the child, it would not be necessary for him to say that it first comes from the parents and the congregation. Thus for Cremer there is a necessary connection between the word and baptism. So the giving of baptism guarantees that the preached word should also be given. This is seen in Cremer's assertion that baptism should be refused to those children whose parents cannot give a guarantee for Christian education. For Cremer it is baptism that makes faith saving faith, but it is the preached word that gives faith its content. To put it more simply, it is the preached word that informs the person concerning whom he should trust.

The second point of agreement with Schleiermacher and others is that infants cannot and do not have faith. It is fitting that a discussion of the term Kinderglauben be included here. On this matter the terminology of the German language is not as precise as that of the English language. This is evident from the fact that on one page Cremer can say that it is an evil thing to speak about "die Unmöglichkeit des Glaubens der Kinder" and on the next page can say "Denn wir begehren sie Taufe für Kinder, die noch nicht glauben können."³² In the first case Cremer is speaking of children and faith is possible for them, and in the second case he is speaking of infants and for them faith is impossible. The difficulty arises because the German language uses one word, Kinder, to express what we in English express in two words, infants and children. The best translation for the English word "infant"

³²Ibid., pp. 63f. Letters separated in original.

is Säugling. However, the most frequent translation of infant baptism is not Säuglingtaufe but Kindertaufe. The same holds true for infant faith which is translated Kinderglauben. When Karl Brinkel studied Luther's concept of infant faith, he entitled his book Die Lehre Luthers von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufe. For Brinkel Kinderglauben is always a reference to infant faith and not simply children's faith. This is clearly indicated by the word fides infantium which appear in the title. The Latin word infans is an adjective meaning "not able to speak." When it is used as a substantive, it refers to a little child. Our English word infant reproduces the concept correctly. Thus infant faith or fides infantium is the faith of those little ones who are so small that they are not able to speak. The German word Kinderglauben can contain this same idea. The difficulty arises in that Kinderglauben can be equally well translated by "faith of a child." It is because the word Kinder can have two meanings when it is used with Glauben, that Cremer apparently can make contradictory and mutually exclusive statements. So Cremer can accept children's faith and deny infants' faith and use the same terminology in both cases.

The third point of similarity with Schleiermacher is that infant baptism is incomplete. Even though this is never explicitly said it is evident since the content of the faith consciousness of the child must come from the word.

Unlike the theologians discussed in the previous chapters, Cremer does not say that infant baptism is not found in Scripture or that the baptism of the New Testament was only for adult believers. However, he never says the opposite. These questions apparently do not disturb Cremer and they are not included.

Cremer probably holds the most extreme view of any of the nineteenth century theologians on the objective efficacy of baptism. Even though the infant cannot believe, justification and regeneration are attributed to him because he has been an object of baptism. Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter said that baptism gave the child the promise of the forgiveness of sins and regeneration. Martensen and others who taught a natural effect of infant baptism said that children were regenerated to some extent in baptism, but they also taught that this regeneration referred to a change within the child. Philippi and Pieper also taught that baptism effected regeneration in infants, but this regeneration was produced by baptism through faith and not by baptism without faith. Cremer teaches an immediate regeneration and justification of the infant through baptism, but without any change occurring in the child. In baptism the child is the object of a divine fiat in baptism that declares him to be justified and regenerated. To this fiat there is absolutely no response from the infant. That the infant through baptism is justified and regenerated is in harmony with Cremer's basic understanding of baptism. As he himself says baptism is the actual washing away of sin, the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit, or it is nothing.

It is true that baptism does effect the great things of which Cremer speaks, but it is also true that everything that baptism gives us, it gives through faith. Baptism does not have an immediate efficacy apart from faith. Baptism works forgiveness of sins and regeneration and gives the Holy Spirit. However, these gifts of grace are only given through faith. Faith is not one gift of grace among many others, but faith is that gift of God through which we receive all other gifts, including justification and regeneration. With Cremer faith is not essential to his understanding of infant baptism. Grace can never take the place of faith as

that means through which we receive every gift from God.

The role of the preached word is also given a position of lesser importance in relation to baptism. The preached word can impart a knowledge of salvation, but it cannot bring about salvation itself. Hearing the preached word alone is not sufficient to create a saving faith. Only baptism can give faith its saving quality. Here the word and baptism have different effects. The power of baptism is not the power of the word. Cremer never uses any expression to indicate that it is the word in baptism which really produces justification and regeneration. Therefore people who have only heard the preached word can neither be justified nor regenerated. These can only be effected by baptism.

With Cremer there is a clear distinction between the regenerate and unregenerate. There is no possibility for a third class as there was by Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter. Those who are baptized are regenerate and those who have not been baptized are not regenerate. Faith is never said to effect regeneration. However, if faith is denounced or given up, a baptized person loses his regeneration. At such a time he is no longer justified. Faith is not a condition for receiving regeneration, but it is a condition for retaining it. Cremer must have come to realize that he had overemphasized the grace of baptism at the expense of faith. Throughout the entire second edition which appeared one year later in 1901 the role given to faith is much greater than in the first edition. It now remains our task to determine whether the addition made in Cremer's 1901 edition indicates a real and essential change in his understanding of baptism or only an apparent change.

Hermann Cremer's position in the 1901 edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe

In 1901 Cremer published again his Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe just one year after Ernst Bunke had written his Lehrstreit über Die Kindertaufe which criticized Cremer for teaching the regeneration of children without faith.³³ The 1901 edition of Cremer's work is his final word on infant baptism. It also represents his final and most developed opinion, since by 1901 he had available the critique of Bunke against his Wesen und Wirkung der Taufgnade and the 1900 edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt, und Kindertaufe.³⁴

Cremer's first task is to define the concept of baptism. This he does according to the Scriptures. In order to see more clearly the saving power of Jesus' baptism, the concept of John's baptism is first presented. When the two baptisms are compared, the baptism of Jesus is found by Cremer to be superior. The baptism of John was not the actual taking away of sins, because this forgiveness was not available when he baptized. This baptism was not the mere promise of forgiveness because this promise was available already in the word of preaching. Rather the baptism of John is to be understood as the guarantee of the forgiveness of

³³Bunke, op. cit., pp. 55ff. Bunke had a chapter entitled "Cremer=Althaus."

³⁴Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1901-1917, pp. 32f. In his 1901-1917 edition, Cremer does mention specifically Bunke's critique of Wesen und Wirkung and Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1900. Against Bunke, Cremer maintains that he never taught that baptism was useful without faith. Nevertheless as mentioned above, Cremer includes in the chapter entitled "Die Notwendigkeit des Glaubens," in his 1901 edition, a chapter which did not appear in the 1900 edition. It appears as if Bunke might have had some influence on Cremer in the second edition.

sins to everyone who confessed his sins. The actual forgiveness of sins the Messiah would bring with Him when He would come.³⁵ Even the baptism which the disciples carried out in Jesus' name was not the forgiveness of sins, but only the guarantee of the forgiveness since like John's baptism, it was performed before the Lord had completed His work of salvation. The forgiveness of sins was present in the person of Jesus but only at the end of His work would the content and value of the forgiveness of sins be revealed.³⁶ Now that the Lord's work of redemption has been completed, baptism is ordered by God as the actual washing away of sins in the name of the Triune God. Since the apostolic baptism is the actual washing away of sins in the name of Jesus, it therefore follows that those who have been baptized are united with Christ who died for them, was buried, and then rose again. By baptism we grow with Him like branches on the vine.³⁷

The baptism of the New Testament stands in close connection with the preaching of salvation. This preaching is confirmed by God's being present in the Holy Spirit. Through preaching the need and desire for salvation is awakened. However, this desire for salvation is not that faith which possesses in Christ the redemption from sins or that experiences the mercy of God. Such faith before baptism realizes that salvation is for the entire world and desires it for itself. This faith is not a complete faith, but only the beginning of faith. Therefore Cremer distinguished between two kinds of faith, one before baptism, and the other after. The faith after baptism is produced by baptism. Faith becomes necessary to receive what baptism offers; nevertheless baptism is not dependent on this faith, but on the word and the will of God. It is through faith that baptism

³⁵Cremer, Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, 1901-1917, p. 19.

³⁶Ibid., p. 21.

³⁷Ibid., pp. 23f.

reveals its content, power and meaning, but these in turn do not come from faith but from the word and the will of God.

According to the New Testament, therefore, being a Christian and the possessing of grace and eternal life are all connected with baptism. Becoming a Christian does not come through hearing of the word and through belief in the truth of the word. For it is possible to be lost when the truth of the word of God condemns the person. Becoming a Christian and a member of God's congregation and the fellowship of salvation comes only through baptism. Cremer describes baptism as giving the entire grace of God, as making the sinner a child and heir of God and a fellow heir with Christ, and as transplanting the sinner out of death into life. If the baptism of infants as practiced in the church is to be the baptism of Christ, it must be the bath of regeneration, the washing away of sins, and the burial and resurrection with Christ. Should infant baptism not do these things it is no baptism.³⁸ Here the goal of Cremer has been set forth. It is his contention that the baptism of infants gives the same blessing to them as the baptism of the New Testament gave to those who received it.

Now that Cremer has defined the New Testament baptism as the washing away of sins, he presents his concept of regeneration and faith. Baptism itself is the bath of regeneration. This bath of regeneration is responsible for making us Christians and bringing us into the state of grace. It is the bath through which we are cleansed of the guilt of sin. In fact there never has been and there is not now any Christian who has not

³⁸ Ibid., pp. 27ff.

become a Christian without baptism.³⁹ Baptism itself is regeneration. Over against the regeneration in baptism stands faith. Regeneration would best be viewed as a quantity to which faith then comes. Thus Cremer can speak of a Subjektive Heilsordnung which is faith and an Objektive Heilsordnung which is the regeneration which comes through baptism and forgiveness of sins. To come into the kingdom of the Messiah one must undergo baptism. It is here that one receives regeneration and forgiveness of sins. However, this regeneration does not involve a change in the person who receives baptism. If baptismal regeneration involves a change in the individual, God would then be gracious to us because of the change which He has brought about in us.⁴⁰ Regeneration is to be thought of as an act of God. It is an act that first happens apart from us. Cremer defines New Testament regeneration as pardon, and the forgiveness of sins. It is called regeneration either because through the forgiveness of sins life is given to us anew or because through the forgiveness of sins we are free from death and judgment. Only through regeneration do we really come into the possession of life or have eternal life. Faith puts the regeneration to work in a personal way, because only by faith is one regenerate, brought to faith, and made alive through grace. One believes in his regeneration and rejoices over it in faith.⁴¹ Faith and not regeneration concerns the inner change in man. This faith justifies not because of its own change, but because it grasps and lays hold of God.⁴² Faith and

³⁹Ibid., p. 35.

⁴⁰Ibid., pp. 46ff.

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 54ff.

⁴²Ibid., p. 86.

baptism go together because only by faith can one have what baptism has to offer. If a person gives up faith, he gives up what baptism has to offer.⁴³ On the contrary if a person is without baptism, his faith is nothing. Faith and baptism belong together because faith receives what baptism gives. What baptism gives it also symbolizes, because in baptism the symbol and the reality are bound together.⁴⁴ Baptism gives regeneration and grace. So far as temporal order is concerned, grace in baptism is given first, to which faith then is added. Faith is the operation of grace in baptism. That we can believe is the work of God's grace even though it is the individual who says that he wants to believe. Whoever has faith should desire baptism, because only in baptism is sin symbolically and actually taken away. There one can meet the mercy of God. Without baptism faith cannot have what baptism offers.⁴⁵

In his understanding of the means of grace, Cremer has very carefully distinguished between baptism and the word. It is baptism that works regeneration, the forgiveness of sins, the state of salvation, and gives eternal life. Faith is the action of man corresponding to this regeneration. Faith which is produced by the preached word responds to the high gifts of God in baptism. There is a faith that is built solely on the preached word; however this faith is not saving faith, because it does not

⁴³Ibid., p. 93.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 96ff.

⁴⁵Ibid., pp. 106ff.

yet possess those blessings which only baptism can offer. Cremer attributed different operations to baptism and the word. Baptism produces salvation and other related blessings. The word produces faith which creates a knowledge in the individual concerning Christ. When baptism is added to this faith, this faith becomes a saving faith because in receiving baptism it receives the blessings of salvation which baptism has to offer. Regeneration and the other blessings of baptism remain outside of man. It is faith which remains within man and lays hold of the blessings of baptism which have an objective existence outside man. One of these blessings is regeneration.

For the most part the chapter dealing with the subject of infant baptism is devoted to a discussion of infant faith. In this edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe it seems that Cremer has come to accept a certain concept of infant faith. If this is so, then it would be a complete reversal of his position set forth in the edition of 1900 where infant faith is explicitly denied.

Cremer comes to accept the doctrine of infant faith because of a certain indispensable role played by faith in the plan of salvation. The life of a regenerate child of God is the life of faith. Only by faith does one possess the eternal blessings, pardon from sin and regeneration. All the blessings of baptism are connected with faith. Without faith there are no blessings derived from baptism. Faith and baptism belong to one another from beginning to end. This connection means not that baptism first becomes effective where there is faith. It means, rather, that it would be dangerous for a baptized person not to believe. Faith is an effect of baptism and as such it should be separated from baptism. For Cremer infant baptism can only be a real baptism, when it is not separated from

what baptism effects. Infant baptism as a real baptism must be the washing away of sins, the bath of regeneration, and the renewal of the Holy Spirit. Baptism and not faith produces the state of grace for the child, and yet faith is necessary if the grace is to be possessed and enjoyed. Through faith the person can hold on to this grace, when he is in doubt.⁴⁶ It begins to become clear why Cremer attributes some type of faith to infants and children, since according to his own definition baptismal grace can only be possessed and enjoyed by faith.

We shall now discuss how the child receives and possesses this faith. When grace is first given to the child, it is given through baptism and not through faith.⁴⁷ Therefore the first bestowal of grace is without faith. Cremer says faith is given to children in the Begnadigung, the act of pardoning grace present in baptism. It is not through faith that God performs his act of pardoning grace, but it is through his act of pardoning grace that he produces faith. The act of pardoning grace is present before faith. Faith is said to be produced when God announces (verkündigt) in the preaching of the Gospel that we have been pardoned by grace (Begnadigung). Our being pardoned does come first when we believe, but it is already present when the preached word comes to us.⁴⁸ It should be noted here that faith does not come from baptism, but from the preaching which tells us that God has pardoned us in baptism. For the child the pardoning grace (Begnadigung) exists as his possession before he comes to faith. Cremer goes on to say that faith is included in the act of pardoning

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 106ff.

⁴⁷Ibid., p. 119.

⁴⁸Ibid., pp. 126f.

grace (Begnadigung). Faith remains there until the time when it first shows itself.

Faith begins to show itself when the child begins to have the facilities of recognition and consciousness.⁴⁹ When Cremer says that faith appears together with consciousness, he does not say that the time of consciousness is the time of baptism. However, Cremer proceeds to say that God effects faith through infant baptism, so through the same action God produces faith in the child. If infant baptism does not effect infant faith, it is not actually baptism. But faith is not to be considered a condition for the giving of grace to the child.⁵⁰

Now through a number of examples from the development of a child's life, Cremer tries to demonstrate what he means when he says that faith comes from and is included in the Begnadigung of baptism. The mind is there and one does not notice that it is there. One awakes but does not know when he awakes. One loves mother and father but does not begin to love them from a particular day on. A person can be self-willed, but there is no definite time that such an attitude of the mind begins. Just as these phenomena are without beginnings which can be set at a definite time, so also the beginning of faith cannot be known with any definiteness. Faith which is effected in our soul by God gradually appears just as our human knowledge, will, love and emotions do. Faith is included in the act of pardoning grace which is given to us in our baptism; however, sometimes this faith is not seen and not used. In some persons faith does awaken. These persons have memories (Andenken) of the Father in heaven and the certainty that they are loved. Such a faith can have many crude features

⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 133f.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 128.

in it. Even though such a faith is not tested, it is nevertheless true and conscious. It is as conscious as the child is conscious of himself and of his parents. One does not know how he comes to faith or from where faith comes; still faith is there. Such faith is said to have come when father and mother spoke it into our hearts and when they taught us to fold our hands. Important to note here is that faith is said to come from our parents and not from our baptism. It might be said that the word from our parents develops what our baptism gives us. Cremer describes the faith created in a child as a conscious faith. This does not mean that this faith must have a knowledge of sin with which to measure the benefits of Christ. The child who says "Father" has a conscious faith, even though he does not understand everything which is contained in the term. This faith does not develop from unconscious faith into conscious faith. Rather one grows into faith without knowing it. One also grows into the possession of the eternal good.⁵¹ Kinderglauben is true, justifying faith, even though it has many false ideas and even though it does not understand the justification of the sinner. Still such a Kinderglauben knows what sin is, what a pure heart is, and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin.⁵² Kinderglauben is a justifying faith by virtue of the fact that it is created by justifying grace and that it lays hold of justifying grace.⁵³

The reason faith does not arise in a baptized person is that he has been neglected by his parents in the area of Christian education. Such a child has not heard of the love of God and of Jesus, of the kingdom of heaven, of the forgiveness of sins, of the salvation from the destruction

⁵¹Ibid., pp. 128ff.

⁵²Ibid., p. 132.

⁵³Ibid., p. 137.

of death, and of regeneration.⁵⁴ In another place, Cremer places the fault for the baptized children's lack of faith on the teachers as well as on the parents because of their attitude of indifference. The grace which is given to the child in baptism unfolds into faith only where Christian fellowship can foster faith. Where there is no Christian fellowship, faith cannot arise in the baptized child. The baptized child who has not received the proper Christian instruction nevertheless remains in grace, but such a child does not experience grace, does not know about it, and does not use it. The fault for the lack of faith does not lie in baptism. The fault belongs to those who kept back that which they have said and shown to the child.⁵⁵ Here it is evident that faith is brought forth from the grace given to the child in baptism by the word of Christians. Baptism creates the basis for faith, but not faith. This is the task of the preached word.

Cremer takes up the problem of why baptism is administered to the children of Christians, but not to the children of heathen. The answer cannot be that the children of Christians are better than those of heathen. If this were so, then the children of Christians would not need baptism and the forgiveness of sins which is there for sinners. Still the children of Christians have it better since they are born within Christendom and within the church of Christ.⁵⁶ Those who are born within the church are already called and chosen. The only thing which remains in doubt is whether those who are chosen by God because of their birth

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 121.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 135f.

⁵⁶Ibid., pp. 142f.

will remain chosen.⁵⁷

Cremer summarizes his entire position on infant baptism as follows:

If we take everything together, the connection with the calling and electing grace of God which comes from the birth within Christendom, by virtue of which our children stand from the very beginning under the power of the word, so then it is also a fact that the grace of God is also valid for our children. As certain as the fact of their being born sinners, of their being born for death, so it is also certain so that they should be born to life, and that finally these children can believe in the power of grace and really believe. Believing is not a privilege of a mature age. Thus it would have been impossible for the church not to come to infant baptism. After the nations had entered into baptism, infant baptism became the common way of carrying out baptism.⁵⁸

It should be noted that for Cremer it was no problem whether infant baptism was an apostolic custom or not. He claims that the possession of the truth and the life in the power of grace and truth is not dependent on knowledge or understanding of the truth.⁵⁹

The primary concern is with the problem of determining whether in 1901 Hermann Cremer actually taught the doctrine of infant faith. If he did, he would have completely reversed the position he maintained a year before in 1900.

There can be no doubt that Cremer uses the term Kinderglauben often and contends that it is an effect of baptism on the child. However, as we have previously discussed, Kinderglauben can have two meanings, infant faith and children's faith. It is our judgment that Cremer uses the term in both ways, but fails to distinguish between them.

It appears to us that Cremer does not really teach infant faith. This is evident from the following reasons. If infants believed through the

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 145.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 147. Translation by the present writer.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 148.

act of baptism there would be no necessity to handle those cases of baptized children where faith does not arise. It is said by Cremer that the child does not come to faith because his parents and teachers did not properly instruct him in the truths of salvation. Thus it would appear that at least the cognitive aspect of faith comes from the preached word. If infants believed by virtue of and at the time of their baptism, then each baptized child would come to faith. It would then be a case of a baptized child losing faith and not a case of faith not arising, as Cremer maintains. Since this Kinderglauben is not dependent on the application of the preached word, it cannot be said that infants believe through their baptism or at the time of their baptism. When Cremer uses the term Kinderglauben as coming from the preached word, he is referring to the faith of a more mature child and not to the faith of an infant. We must then consider very carefully and seriously what Cremer means when he says that faith is included in the act of pardoning grace (Begnadigung) which comes to the infant through his baptism. Important here is the understanding of the concept that faith is included in the Begnadigung. The baptized child regardless of age does receive faith in the Begnadigung. However the faith which is included in Begnadigung is given to the child as an object in the same sense that regeneration is given. Both the faith contained in the Begnadigung and regeneration are effects of baptism and both have objective existences apart from the subjective disposition of the person who possesses them. Thus for a child to receive faith in the Begnadigung does not necessarily mean that the child is personally and actively engaged in an act of trusting. Thus an infant can have faith as his possession and still know nothing of God or of Christ. For this reason Cremer says that the fault

that some children do not come to faith lies with the parents who have not taught them anything about salvation. Here Cremer is using faith as an actual trust on the child's part and not as part of the Begnadigung. That faith can be possessed as an object which does not involve the person subjectively can be better understood when Cremer's concept of regeneration is understood. For Cremer baptism effects regeneration in infants before faith. Regeneration is a quantity available only in baptism. It does not involve a change in the person. In the sense that faith is a quantity, as is regeneration, Cremer can speak about infants believing. All children who have received baptism also receive faith as a quantity contained in the Begnadigung.

Without specifically saying so, Cremer has given two meanings to Kinderglauben. There is one type of Kinderglauben that exists before the preached word and another type after. In Cremer's own discussion of baptism, a precedence has already been established concerning types of faith. With adults Cremer distinguished between the faith before baptism and the faith after baptism. Only the faith after baptism can be designated as saving faith. With children there is an implied distinction between faith before the preached word and faith after the preached word. Both types of faith are saving faith. But only after the preached word can it be said that the child trusts in an object which he knows. The preached word supplies the cognitive aspect of faith.

One questions Cremer's use of the word Kinderglauben before the child is involved in an act of trusting. Cremer really defines Kinderglauben as an act of God. He makes it an object which God dispenses in baptism to children. Against such a concept it should be said that even though God is responsible for faith and works all faith through the Holy Spirit, the

simple fact remains that faith is an act of man in which he trusts in God. Faith is always man's faith and not God's faith. It has God for its object, but still it is man who is active in it. Faith is produced by God's grace, but it is not something which we receive in the Begnadigung.

In the 1900 edition of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe, Cremer so used the term Kinder that he could maintain Kinderglauben on one page and deny it on the next. It has been adequately explained what difficulties are involved in the understanding of the term Kinder when it is used in such double words as Kindertaufe and Kinderglauben. It may be said that Cremer has again taken refuge in this confusing terminology in his 1901 edition so that he can make statements which when taken literally contradict one another. It may be concluded that Cremer accepts Kinderglauben in so far as children can come to faith through the preached word and that he denies Kinderglauben in so far as infants can personally believe through their baptism and at the time of their baptism.

In the 1901 edition Cremer uses the term Kinder ambiguously in connection with Kinderglauben. He also uses Glauben in two ways. As it has been shown, Cremer uses Glauben as a quantity which comes through baptism and also as an act of trust by which the person believes in God and Christ. It is no wonder that Reinhold Seeberg and Karl Brinkel, both of whom had at their disposal the 1901 edition of Cremer's work, could come to opposing opinions on whether or not Cremer accepted infant faith. Seeberg found no infant faith in Cremer's position and Brinkel found it. The differences between the 1900 and 1901 editions of Taufe, Wiedergeburt und Kindertaufe are more apparent than real. It must be remembered that Bunke criticized Cremer's 1900 edition because he left faith out of the regeneration of children. By mentioning Bunke in the 1901 edition Cremer indicates that

he was aware of Bunke's criticism against him. In the 1901 edition there is much more space given to faith. However infant faith was just another object which was given along with other objects, such as regeneration and justification. Cremer still has the same strong emphasis on the objective efficacy of baptism as he did in 1900. One might even say that it was stronger, since not only a regeneration and justification were given to the child without his personal participation, but also "faith" was given as an object which did not subjectively involve the child in any way.

Conclusion

The principle of the objective efficacy of baptism was established by Althaus in his exegetical study of baptism in the New Testament. This principle was applied specifically to infants and children by Cremer. Althaus' and Cremer's understanding of baptismal regeneration was an obvious denial of the sola fide principle of the Lutheran Church. If their principle would be carried out to its logical consequences, baptism alone would be sufficient in all persons for regeneration and participation in communion with God and Christ. Sufficient criticism of Althaus and Cremer has been expressed in connection with each. However, it should be noted that the basic error in Althaus's and Cremer's understanding of baptism is the failure to distinguish between the essence of baptism and the personal blessing of baptism. The essence of baptism according to Lutheran doctrine remains the same, even if all the world should not believe. Its essence can be said to be objective in character in that it depends on God and not on man or on his faith. The personal blessing (Wirkung) of baptism is always dependent on faith. Baptism is the operation of God, but it is also the operation of God on man. When God works on man in the matter of salvation, the proper response of man is faith. Unless man responds in faith

to God, He cannot bring man to salvation. Faith is that God-created means through which He gives all of His blessings of salvation. Without faith God's saving activity in baptism can have no effect. Thus the effect of baptism is subjective in character in that baptism works faith and works through faith. Baptism does not work apart from faith. Althaus and Cremer have ignored the Lutheran distinction between the objective character of the essence of baptism and the subjective character of its efficacy. For them both the essence of baptism and its efficacy are objective in character.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

The present writer has attempted to give an overview and critique of the doctrine of infant baptism in the German Protestant theology of the nineteenth century by examining this doctrine as it was held by representative theologians. The one group which has been omitted is made up of the Confessional Lutherans or, as they were otherwise called the Repristinatiotheologen. All general conclusions made by the present writer concerning infant baptism in the last century will not take the Confessional Lutheran position into account. As mentioned previously, the position of the Confessional Lutherans is that of the Missouri Synod today.

Aside from these theologians, four principles are commonly found among the German Protestant theologians in regard to infant baptism. (1) Baptism cannot create saving faith. (2) Saving faith can only be produced by the spoken word in persons who have reached a certain level of consciousness. Since infants or young children have not reached this level of consciousness, they cannot have faith. (3) Since children are without faith at the time of their baptism, their baptism is incomplete. (4) This incompleteness is corrected when the child receives faith through the spoken word. For some theologians the time of coming to faith is identified with confirmation. Each of these four points will be discussed separately.

The Inability of Baptism to Create Faith

From the time of Rationalism and throughout the nineteenth century, the German Protestant theologians denied to baptism the innate power to

create faith. Among the theologians after Schleiermacher, there was an attempt to attribute some type of soteriological efficacy to baptism. The Erlangen theologians said that baptism had an effect on the nature of the child. Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter said that baptism was a promise of salvation to the child. Cremer claimed that salvation was attributed in its entirety to the child through baptism. None taught, however, that baptism had the innate power to create faith. Baptism did help to bring a child to faith, since this sacrament did bring the child into association with the church. Within this association, the child could come into contact with those things by which faith could arise. Thus baptism had a function in the process of bringing a child to faith, but of itself it was incapable of doing this.

The inability of baptism to create faith stems from Rationalism and is unequivocally opposed to the position of Luther.¹ For Luther baptism as a bearer of the word could create faith. Even though the Erlangen theologians attributed a mysterious power to baptism, this was not the power of the word to create faith. For all, the power of the word followed or accompanied baptism in the spoken form. No one taught that the word was in the water.

The Inability of Children to Receive Faith

Prevalent throughout the German Protestant theology was the idea that consciousness or self-consciousness was necessary in a person before faith could be created. Without a certain level of consciousness, faith was thought to be an utter impossibility. Since children seemed to lack the

¹Karl Brinkel, Lehre Luther's von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufe (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958), p. 95.

required consciousness, they were thought to be completely incapable of faith. Infant faith was said to be a psychological impossibility. In examining the many writings which appeared in this connection, the present writer has not found one adequate explanation concerning the supposed psychological impossibility of faith in infants.

Karl Brinkel asserts that the denial of infant faith is an outgrowth of the philosophy of Idealism.² Under the influence of this philosophy, it was generally accepted that faith, which in part consists of knowledge, could only be created by the transmission of knowledge through the senses to the conscious mind. When this principle was applied to infant baptism, it made drastic changes in regard to Luther's doctrine that baptism created faith in infants. Changes were made on two points. First of all, since knowledge was information communicated through the senses, baptism as the application of water to the body did not transmit knowledge. Hence of itself it is in no case able to create faith which involves knowledge. Even the Erlangen theologians were very careful to state that baptism had "naturalistic" effects on the body and not on the mind.

Secondly, even if saving knowledge could be communicated to the children apart from baptism, but through other means, they still could not believe because their minds are not sufficiently conscious to receive impressions. The present writer believes that the philosophy of Idealism with its emphasis on the conscious mind as a necessary part in the process of knowledge had the greatest effect in the various positions on infant baptism of the theologians here discussed. Because of this principle, infant faith became an impossibility. With the denial of infant faith, it became necessary to redefine the soteriological benefits of baptism in

²Ibid.

regard to infants who were said to be without faith. This had to be done in order to do justice to the New Testament where it was recognized that baptism together with faith had a definite part in the appropriation of salvation. After Schleiermacher, these theologians tried to reconcile the Rationalistic theory that children could not believe with the New Testament concept that baptism and faith are connected. Every doctrine of infant baptism tried to reconcile these opposing views.

The Incompleteness of Infant Baptism

Since infant baptism was administered in the knowledge that the children would not come to faith through the application of this sacrament, it was agreed that their baptism was incomplete according to the New Testament standards where faith was required. The Rationalists and Supranaturalists taught that later in life faith would arise in association with the church. Schleiermacher actually favored the position of the Anabaptists in dropping infant baptism, because faith was lacking in them. However, he tolerated the idea that children could be baptized in regard to their future faith in connection with confirmation. Even though the Erlangen theologians taught a "naturalistic" operation of infant baptism, they also were aware that because of the lack of faith it was incomplete. They agreed with the Rationalists and Schleiermacher, that baptism was administered to infants in regard to their future faith. Bunke, Seeberg, Schlatter, and Cremer all concur in this opinion. In order to avoid the possibility that a baptized child would not come to faith, it was taught that only children born of Christians should be baptized. Cremer favored having smaller congregations, so that the pastor through interrogation could determine which parents had sufficient faith to merit having their children baptized. Baptism was even to be denied those unchurched parents requesting baptism for their children. Such a position indicates that not

baptism but the spoken word has the power to accomplish salvation in the child. This position is opposed by Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther, who taught that baptism effected faith in all children brought to baptism, regardless of the religion of the parents.³

In this regard, the question of emergency baptism comes up. Not one of the theologians here discussed made any reference to baptizing children who are in immediate danger of death. If children are to be baptized in regard to their future faith, then it is doubtful whether a child in immediate danger of dying should be baptized. According to the principles set forth, such a baptism would be wrong since there is little chance that the child will come to faith through the spoken word. If these principles were applied, a child in danger of dying could only be baptized after he had passed the crisis. Only then would there be sufficient chance that he would live long enough to receive the spoken word, by which faith comes. The absolute silence concerning emergency infant baptism suggests that if it had been discussed, it would have been renounced because of theological principles. In fact infant baptism is not absolutely necessary, since the possibility of damnation for children is ignored or denied.

Supplementing Infant Baptism

All insisted that infant baptism was incomplete because of the lack of faith. The Rationalists and Schleiermacher saw confirmation as the one rite by which this lack was corrected. The other said that a confession may be confirmation. The mere fact that infant baptism had to be supplemented by another action denied its soteriological efficacy. Thus less power was attributed to baptism than to the word. The spoken word

³Americanisch-Lutherische Pastoraltheologie (St. Louis, Mo.: Druckerei der Synode von Missouri, Ohio u. a. Staaten, 1872), pp. 125ff.

could create faith, but baptism could not.

These four principles, though negatively stated, were generally accepted by the German Protestant theologians in the nineteenth century in regard to the doctrine of infant baptism. These principles are results of Nationalism and are contrary to the doctrine of Luther and the Lutheran Confessions.

The Soteriological Effects of Infant Baptism

As mentioned above, these theologians did want to attribute some type of soteriological efficacy to infant baptism because of the New Testament evidence. Since infant faith was denied, this had to be an efficacy apart from faith. Cremer and Althaus taught that baptism effected complete salvation for the child, even though it did not believe. The Erlangen theologians taught a "naturalistic" efficacy of baptism. Bunke, Seeberg, and Schlatter spoke about the saving efficacy of baptism in terms of promise. Through baptism certain blessings were promised to the child.

Though these theologians had varying opinions on the efficacy of infant baptism, they were agreed that it saved the child apart from faith and that it had an efficacy in connection with the corporate life of the congregation. The mere association with the congregation was beneficial for the salvation of the child. For the Rationalists, salvation was connected with moral living. Impetus to live morally could be received from moral people in the congregation. This was the soteriological efficacy of baptism for the Rationalists. Though Schleiermacher is considered quite different in many aspects from the Rationalists, he is very similar to them in his teaching concerning the efficacy of infant baptism. For him there is no direct efficacy on the person of the child. Efficacy is limited to association with the congregation. The Christian life or the life of good works can best be perfected within the boundaries of the Christian

congregation. In fact, actual salvation is considered to be association with the outward body of Christians. Therefore for Schleiermacher baptism has soteriological significance in that it brings the child into this outward association.

The mysterious Naturwirkung of the Erlangen theologians is certainly very unlike anything taught by the Rationalists and Schleiermacher. However, with the Erlangen theologians baptism also has an efficacy in connection with being associated with the outward congregation. The mysterious Naturwirkung accomplished in the child through baptism is only completed when that child comes to faith within the congregation of the baptized. They defined the church according to baptism and not according to faith. Bunke, Seeberg, Schlatter, and Cremer return to Schleiermacher's concept that baptism ushers the child into the outward association of believers. Within this association, the child can come to faith.

Thus for all these theologians, baptism has an efficacy in connection with the corporate body of the outward church. The efficacy of the sacrament is not in the sacrament itself, but in the association whose membership requires baptism. Baptism is not the primary agent for bringing the child to faith. It has a secondary function in that it ushers the child into the church where faith can be worked. Thus in regard to faith, baptism is not the sacrament or the means of grace, but the church is. The connecting of salvation with outward association of church members is, as Werner Elert points out, a thought originating with Schleiermacher and not Luther.⁴

⁴Abendmahl und Kirchengemeinschaft in der alten Kirche hauptsächlich des Ostens (Berlin: Lutherisches Verlagshaus, 1954), pp. 5ff.

The Two Alternatives

As mentioned above, the Protestant theology of Germany in the nineteenth century tried to reconcile the new learning of Rationalism with the older Lutheranism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This was especially true in regard to infant baptism. With the Rationalists and Schleiermacher, these theologians were agreed that the baptism of the New Testament was one administered in faith. Of this children were not capable. For these theologians infant baptism was not that of the New Testament. That it was Scriptural in origin was either denied or strongly doubted. They also agreed that baptism was not a means for creating faith.

On the other hand, the older Lutheranism had taught that infant baptism could have a direct saving efficacy for children. This was an efficacy always in connection with the faith of the child as it was present at the time of his baptism. Infant baptism was not only in harmony with the Holy Scripture, but demanded by it. This conclusion is based upon the child's share in the universality of sin and his capability of being saved through baptism and faith.

After Schleiermacher the German Protestant theologians attempted to mediate between the alternatives represented by the Rationalists and Schleiermacher on one side and the older Lutheranism on the other. With the former the German Protestant theologians agreed that children could not believe and that baptism could not create faith. With the latter they agreed that baptism should have a certain definite soteriological efficacy in regard to the child.

But can these two alternatives as represented by Schleiermacher and the older Lutheranism be reconciled? The attempt at reconciliation meant

that salvation was attributed to the child without the benefit of his own faith. But such a reconciliation is opposed both to the positions of Schleiermacher and the older Lutheran theologians for both of whom baptism in the New Testament was one connected with faith.

If the New Testament principles are not to be violated in regard to baptism, one of the two alternatives must be chosen. If children are not capable of faith as the Anabaptists, the Rationalists, and Schleiermacher contend, then they should not be baptized because such a baptism is opposed to the New Testament where baptism is administered in faith. This course of action was demanded by the Anabaptists and approved by Schleiermacher. The other alternative is to retain the practice of baptizing infants and to assert the doctrine of infant faith. As Franz Pieper demonstrates, the doctrine of infant faith can be asserted to be a Scriptural doctrine even apart from the question of baptism.⁵ Of course the doctrine of infant faith is contrary to many cherished psychological and philosophical presuppositions arising out of Humanism and Rationalism, which are not in harmony with the Scriptures or Luther.⁶

In choosing between the alternatives, the basic principle of the Lutheran Church that a man is saved by faith alone, sola fide, must be seriously considered. Neither the Scriptures nor the Lutheran Confessions allow for any exceptions to this principle. If a person is to be saved, it must be through faith. Children are born of flesh and blood and do not constitute a special class between man and the angels. As long as children are without faith, they are under the wrath of God. If baptism is

⁵Christliche Dogmatik (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1917), II, 537f.

⁶Brinkel, op. cit., p. 95.

to be delayed till the time of maturity, then this is saying either that children are holy enough without baptism or that it is impossible for them to be saved. The first alternative is Pelagianism because it denies original sin. The second alternative is Manichaeism because the child is damned without having a chance. Both these alternatives must be rejected on Scriptural basis because they both deny the grace of God. The first denies that grace alone saves and the second denies the universality of grace.

Because God never assigns to children a special category in regard to salvation and because He never denies salvation to them, their salvation is accomplished by their believing the saving Gospel. In this they are like all other human beings. By denying infant faith, the German Protestant theologians were violating the basic principle of salvation that all men, including children, can only be saved through faith.

If we are to remain faithful to the Lutheran Confessions, then we must accept the doctrine of infant faith. From the Nicene Creed we know that God gives salvation in baptism. Confiteor unum baptismam in remissionem peccatorum. This salvation is personally appropriated through faith as taught by the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, "Igitur sola fide iustificamur." If baptism is to benefit the recipient, it must be received in faith. Without faith, the baptized is still under the wrath of God. It was this basic principle that the German Protestant theologians of the nineteenth century violated in regard to infant baptism.

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