

To the Pastors and Teachers of the Southern California District,  
The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod:

The theme of this year of Reformation Anniversary is “Life — New Life.”

Upon direction from the program committee of your conference, I prepared the following paper, “Life: New Life in Baptism” in order to coincide with this year’s theme. Though the material is chiefly exegetical, it was directed specifically to the new life of the Christian. I have taken the liberty of including notes for each chapter. Since Baptism has been the center of much theological controversy and discussion in the last two decades, I have made some reference to other opinions where I thought it was pertinent; Moreover, it would take another study to present a resume of contemporary discussions. I truly appreciated the opportunity given me to be with you and may this paper be of some small benefit to you.

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# Life — New Life in Baptism

## I. Baptism Is God's Revelatory Act to Create the New Life

Christian Baptism as practiced by the church is based on the direct command of our Lord as recorded in the last chapter of Matthew. According to this Gospel writer, it belongs to the post-resurrection appearances of the Savior to the Apostles and constitutes the final words of the Savior. It is part of the following passage:

“All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always to the close of the age.”<sup>1</sup>

A correct understanding of Christian Baptism must not be based on this isolated command of our Lord, even though this is the primary basis for it: But a correct understanding must take into consideration this question: “What place does Baptism have in the entire Gospel of Matthew?” If we can answer the question of the importance of Baptism in Matthew's Gospel, I believe we can better answer the question of how Baptism is related to the Christian's entire life of sanctification.

From what we know about the Gospel of St. Matthew and from the location of this command in this particular Gospel, we can assert that *Baptism is the culmination and the apex of God's revelation to man*. Thus, it is God Himself who, through Baptism, serves as the basis for the new life of the Christian in Jesus Christ, St. Matthew's Gospel, is the Gospel of the kingdom of God. In spite of modern perversions of the phrase “kingdom of God” — or “kingdom of heaven” into some type of ecclesiastical social action group attempting to change society, the kingdom for Matthew is the coming of Jesus Christ, who is the king of the kingdom of heaven. The genealogical lines given in the first chapter of Matthew, the greeting of the blind man, and our Lord's entry into Jerusalem clearly indicate that He is David's Son and that in him the promises made to David about the everlasting kingdom have come true. To Pontius Pilate, Jesus asserts he is the King of the Jews; His cross broadcasts that he who hangs here is the King of the Jews; and the words of our Lord after his resurrection recorded by Matthew indicate His kingship. “All power is given to me in heaven and earth,”

Now it should be noted that it is in connection with this last assertion of kingly authority that Jesus gives the command to baptize. The official name in Matthew for a member of this kingdom is “a disciple.” Thus, it should also be noted that the words of our Lord clearly indicate that through Baptism people will

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<sup>1</sup> Matthew 28:19f.

be given the status of disciples and thus also members of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> A correct understanding of Baptism must include more than isolated sacramentalism as if the Baptismal rite were performed as an unnecessary appendage of the church's work, Baptism belongs to the basic foundation of the church because entrance into the kingdom is made contingent on its being administered.

The way in which Matthew has organized his Gospel gives us a hint for a correct understanding of this sacrament. I call your attention to the first and the last verses of this Gospel. The first words of this Gospel are, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham," and the final words, of course have to do with bringing in the nations into the kingdom relationship through baptism. Though the institution of baptism is uniquely Christian, belonging to the New Testament, having been instituted by the resurrected Christ, the roots of baptism can be traced back into the Old Testament. What once began alone with Abraham in Ur of the Chaldees, a city in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, now through baptism, has universal dimensions. For as God once revealed himself to Abraham, now he desires to reveal himself to all people through baptism. Thus, Matthew begins with Abraham and ends with the dominical command to baptize the nations. But I believe we can see the roots of baptism back further than Abraham. And that its origins may be found at the time of Adam's son Seth.

To understand what baptism is and what the power of baptism is, more attention must be given to the word "name" in the phrase "baptizing them, in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." Baptism is the highest revelatory act of God's grace to the individual because through it, God reveals his essence or what he is through a revelation of his name as Father, Son and Spirit, and whenever God reveals his essence, he does so with the express purpose of saving those who hear the name and believe it. Of course, baptism is the epitome of God's revelations, because through this act alone, we not only know more about the essence of God intellectually, but God, in his essence, approaches the individual as close as the water touches the body. Though baptism is the closest possible union between God and the believer, whereby his triune essence is revealed to us, baptism is the last in a series of revelations to be performed by God since the fall of man into sin.

The word "*name*" in the dominical command attaches the baptizing action of the church with the revelatory activity of God himself throughout the Old Testament in lesser revelations before the time of Christ for the same purpose of attaching men to his kingdom and to begin the new life in them.

Wherever people know the name of the Lord, whether it be through Old Testament revelation or through baptism, a change comes over their lives, so that they put away the former things of their existence. They begin to call upon the name, whether it be the name of the still incomplete Old Testament revelation or the name of the Triune God in baptism. Thus, the revelation of God through his name always initiates a change in the life of the individual to whom God has revealed Himself and who, in turn, also accepts this revelation.

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<sup>2</sup> Fried. Ad. Philippi, *Die Lehre von der Heilsordnung, von den Gnadenmitteln und von der Kirche* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1874), pp. 213ff

At the time of Seth “men began to call upon the name of the Lord.”<sup>3</sup> Though this might seem an innocent and inconsequential reference, we see here the basic relation of God to men, a relation which would reach the epitome in baptism. By some means not known to us, God had revealed who he was to the descendants of Adam. Though all men then living might have come into contact with the revelation, only those associated with Seth called upon the name of the Lord. Calling upon the name of the Lord is not merely an intellectual activity, but it is an activity whereby we turn our whole selves away from ourselves to God’s purposes. The reference to men calling upon the name of the Lord is a very critical milestone in the history of salvation. It follows the account of the total perversion of the world through sin which resulted in the murder of Abel. Throughout Scripture, murder is painted as the blackest sin. Satan is called a murderer.<sup>4</sup> The person who does not love his brother is called a murderer.<sup>5</sup> A murderer belongs to the kingdom of Satan because as St. John says “ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.” God reveals His name to men at the time of Seth, so that instead of venting their hatred on one another, they might know God through the revelation of his name and call upon it. What the revelation of the name of the Lord in the days of Seth did for those people who were beings slowly enveloped into Cain’s race, is analogous to God’s action in baptism through which He calls them away from their former way of living to a new life in Christ.

There are, I believe, two other prominent revelations of God in the Old Testament that will help us understand what baptism can do in the life of an individual. In considering these sections dealing with God’s revelation to Abraham and then some five hundred years later to Moses, please keep in mind our thesis that baptism is a revelatory action of God whereby he calls people to a new life and away from their former existence.

There are striking parallels between the call of Abraham and the Christian institution of baptism in Matthew’s Gospel. Of course, the arrangement of this Gospel suggests Abraham belongs to that same kingdom.<sup>6</sup> In fact, Abraham is the first member of that kingdom, which Christ says will now be perpetuated through baptism. Both the call of Abraham and the call of God in baptism reveals something about God to the recipient, which was not known before. To Abraham God revealed Himself as God Almighty (*El Shaddai*)<sup>7</sup> In baptism God reveals himself not only as the Almighty God, because Jesus attributes power to himself in saying “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” but he adds the information that the name of God is the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Just as before Abraham, no one knew God by the name El Shaddai, so also before Christ instituted baptism, God was not known by this exact formula, even though the traces of it are found in the preaching of Jesus as well as foreshadowed in the Old Testament. The second similarity is that the revelation of God brings a change in

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<sup>3</sup>Genesis 4:26.

<sup>4</sup> John 8:44.

<sup>5</sup> 1 John 3:15

<sup>6</sup> Mathew 1:1; 3:9; 8:11.

<sup>7</sup> Genesis 17: 1; Exodus 6:2.

how the individual stands in relationship to his environment. God's call came to Abraham while he was still living among his fellow tribesmen in the Mesopotamian valley particularly in Ur of the Chaldees and Haran. This call of God, whereby God revealed his name and the plan of salvation in which Abraham was to be instrumental, necessitated that Abraham leave his former environment, which included friends and close relatives, and move to Canaan which, according to promise, would become the location of a kingdom through which God would bring salvation to all men.<sup>8</sup>

So, likewise, baptism involves this same change, not spatially but ethically. Baptism brings the captives out from the captivity of sin. It ushers those who sit in the land of darkness into the land of light. And as baptism is situated in Matthew's Gospel it is the passageway for those who leave the kingdom of this world for the kingdom of heaven. The story of the victory of God's kingdom over Satan's kingdom is written on every page in Matthew's Gospel.<sup>9</sup> These two kingdoms stand opposed to one another. It is impossible for anyone to serve two masters without hating or loving the one or the other.

The story of the rich young man is the story of one, though a descendent of Abraham, is very much unlike Abraham because he refuses to transfer all his allegiance from the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of heaven. Wherever anyone left his former allegiance to accept membership as a disciple in the New Kingdom, he was baptized. This is shown in the baptizing activity of John the Baptist and the disciples of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> After Abraham knew the name of God, he began a new existence in a new land. So, after Baptism the Christian also begins a new existence. Because God has revealed himself, he now stands within a new kingdom.

The third similarity between the call of God to Abraham to begin a new life and the call of God in baptism to us to begin a new life is that both agreements are marked with an outward action. Circumcision was for Abraham the sign that he stood in a unique relationship to God than, for example, his kinsmen did. Baptism is an outward act that is capable of historical reference even though a person's faith may waver, he can still look at such mundane things as church registers and baptismal certificates to show beyond the shadow of a historical doubt that God through baptism has revealed himself particularly to him. The parallel between baptism and circumcision is made by St. Paul in Colossians 2:11-12, where baptism is called the circumcision made without hands or the circumcision of Christ.

The fourth similarity between the call of Abraham and baptism is that both were initiatory acts whereby God was inaugurating a new phase in the history of salvation. With the call of Abraham, God was breaking through with special information about salvation, not hitherto known and undoubtedly the same, could be said about baptism. To avoid confusion, I would just like to make one brief point here. God's revelatory acts either in the Old Testament or through Christian baptism does not mean that the recipient of such revelations were beforehand

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<sup>8</sup> Genesis 12: 1.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Matthew 4:1-11.

<sup>10</sup> John 4:1 f.

totally ignorant of God, because both Abraham, as well as the disciples who heard the dominical command to baptize were acquainted with the true God. But through these actions, God brings men to higher plateaus. This is evident in the case of the Ethiopian eunuch who believed Christ but who then in baptism wanted to receive the seal or mark of the kingdom,<sup>11</sup> There are other similarities between the call of Abraham and Christian baptism which can be made, for example, the universal dimensions of each. But for the sake of order, I'd like to discuss those below.

There is one other incident in the Old Testament that bears directly on baptism. The call of Moses and the giving of the law and the making of the covenant at Sinai are analogous to God's activity in baptism.<sup>12</sup> There is to Moses a new revelation of God's name. To Abraham, God was the Almighty God or *El Shaddai*. To Moses, God makes a new revelation of himself as Yahweh or the '*I AM WHAT I AM*.'<sup>13</sup> Even though God cannot be defined as such, this phrase, '*I AM WHAT I AM*' comes closer than anything else to telling us about the essence of God. What happened to Moses with the special revelation of the essence of God is analogous to the disciples, who learned that the Lord Almighty who appeared to Abraham and the '*I AM WHAT I AM*' who appeared to Moses, was the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus, baptism, which is the base of the Christian life reveals something to the recipient which not even the greatest of the Old Testament prophets knew. The call of Moses came to him in Egypt, the land of bondage, and was the promise of deliverance with the entry into Canaan.

Likewise, baptism brings us from bondage of sin into the liberty of the free sons of God. There is one other similarity that should be brought out. The name revealed to Moses and the name of God revealed to the Christian in his own baptism give authority to the bearer. God instructed Moses to go to his people saying that '*I AM* sent you.' Because of the experience on Horeb, Moses had authority among his people. The authority of the church whereby she carries out the Lord's command to evangelize the world and make disciples of all nations is the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is an authority, which belongs collectively to the kingdom or the church, but it also belongs to each individual Christian believer. The doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers has its roots in baptism, whereby the name of God applies to each believer. Everyone with this name is a disciple in the kingdom and, hence, a son or daughter of the king. The authority given to the individual believer in baptism is to share this grace in baptism with those who still stand outside the kingdom,

With the breaking in of the New Testament, God institutes through the incarnation a deeper revelation of himself. The words of the prophets have come true about the dwelling place of God "is now with men". A revelation of God means God declares something of his nature that was not previously known or only known in the manner of foreshadowing. With the incarnation, God establishes another covenant with man through angels. The name of God is now revealed as *Jesus* and *Emmanuel*. Both are descriptions of this new revelatory

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<sup>11</sup> Acts 8:36ff.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1 ff.

<sup>13</sup> Exodus 6:3.

covenant relationship. The Lord Almighty revealed to Abraham and the '*I AM WHAT I AM*', is now by definition the God who shall save the people from their sins. The name of God as Jesus and the name of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit serves as brackets around the actual saving events of Christ's life as presented in Matthew's Gospel. Both events, the naming of the child of Mary as Jesus and the declaration of God as Triune in baptism, appear in strategic locations in Matthew's Gospel.

The long sequence of revelatory events whereby God reveals Himself and His plan to men through names culminates in the last chapter of Matthew — To make disciples in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. What was hidden during the Old Testament and even partly in the ministry of Jesus is now fully revealed through Christian baptism. The book of Acts is the story of how those who attach themselves to the new kingdom also receive, by faith, the revelation attached to baptism, that God is triune. Wherever God is active in baptism, there also the name of Jesus is preached, and the Spirit is at work creating and encouraging faith. To summarize, baptism is to be considered as belonging to a series of revelations, unique in the sense that through these revelations, God reveals His name. As with other revelations of this sort, it begins or inaugurates a new or different type of life. But baptism is the epitome because it reveals a relationship existing in God Himself, a personal communion between the divine three persons previously hidden from the eyes of men.

Baptism is then the action of the great and mysterious triune God and directly upon the recipient. It is obvious and really does not need mentioning that God has chosen men like us to bear this special revelation of his name to other men through baptism. Before Jesus suffered, the disciples had done some baptizing. They were commanded to do the same in the command of Matthew 28. The book of Acts mentions the baptizing activities of the disciples, especially Peter and Paul. Nevertheless, the real baptizer is always God Himself. There is only one baptism, and this is instituted by Christ. And each subsequent baptism, whether done by Peter or by us extends this one baptism. We who pour the water are really only secondary instruments in the hand of God and God, through His mercy, has a ready supply of replacements for us.

*Baptism is not our action.* But baptism is God's self-revelatory action of himself through us who are means, agents or simply implements in his hand. Baptizing people in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit also includes the idea that what we do, we do because of God's authority. Through us God is in baptism reaching into the lives of other people to attach them to His kingdom, The pourer of the water does not detract from baptism being God's act alone nor does he add to it. Though it was my pastor who baptized me, it was really the triune God, who through this washing, was working on me. Though this might seem to be an elementary point, there were Christians in Corinth who thought that being baptized by certain apostles was more efficacious than being baptized by those of lower rank, St. Paul writes: "I am thankful that I baptized none of you, ... lest anyone should say that you were baptized in my name."<sup>14</sup> In the Scriptures all three persons are described together and singularly as being active in baptism.

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<sup>14</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:14f.

In Matthew 28 all three persons of the Trinity supply both the power of baptism and its authority. But it is interesting to note that already here we also see special references to the Father and the Son. The baptismal command is predicated by the phrase “All authority is given to me” What Jesus is saying could be paraphrased into “the Father has given me the authority to institute baptism,” In Acts 2:38 the story of the Pentecost baptism, Jesus and the Spirit are pictured as active in baptism. “Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Throughout the book of Acts baptism is carried out in the name of Jesus and accompanied with the gift of the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup>

Apart from the examples in Acts, Christ is spoken of by St. Paul as baptizing the church, “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the word.”<sup>16</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13 identifies the Spirit as the prime actor in Baptism, “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and all were made to drink of the same Spirit.” There is still one more passage showing that all three persons of the Trinity work on the recipient of Baptism.<sup>17</sup> “But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit of our God.” Note here the Father is identified as ‘God’, the Son by the “Lord Jesus,” and the Holy Ghost by the phrase ‘Spirit of our God’. It matters little whether one or all persons of the Trinity are mentioned by the New Testament writer in connection with baptism. Since Christ instituted baptism, God has been revealed in his triune essence so that where one person of the Trinity is present with His grace, there the others must also be present.<sup>18</sup>

Baptism is always God’s act and as such even is the foundation of the entire life of the Christian. A quick glance at all the references to baptism in the New Testament will show that the word “to baptize” appears in an overwhelming number of cases in the passive voice, this shows that the recipient of baptism does not really add anything to his baptism. It also shows that the baptizer plays a secondary role at best. And the use of the passive indicates in good Hebrew fashion God is really the baptizer and through baptism he is the foundation of the Christian’s life.<sup>19</sup>

In this section, we have attempted to show that the content of baptism is God himself and that he is the one who is working in baptism. Thus, in baptism, God is both the working subject and the object who draws near in baptism. Because of this action of the Triune God on the individual, God lives within the Christians in a way which is unique to them alone. 1 Corinthians, which contains much material on baptism, including Trinitarian references, also speaks of

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<sup>15</sup> Acts 10:48.

<sup>16</sup> Ephesians 5:25

<sup>17</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13.

<sup>18</sup> The fears of Christians concerning modern Unitarianism were not really concerns of the early church. Thus, to baptize in the Name of Jesus was not essentially different from baptizing in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus, in whose name some were baptized, is always the Son of the Father and his presence is always associated with the Holy Spirit. To mention Jesus is not to exclude the other we divine Persons, but to include them.

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews to avoid the use of the Name of God frequently used the passive voice.



Christians being the temple of God and the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit within them. Thus, the purpose of God's revelatory action is the union of God with the believer. Through the covenant, Abraham came into special communion with God. Through the mosaic covenant, God came into a special relationship with the Jews establishing the kingdom of the Old Covenant and through the covenant, established by Christ in baptism, the Triune God enters the heart of every believer. On this account, we believe Christ and baptism to be the supreme revelation of God to the individual.

## II. The Basis of the New Life in Baptism Is the Work of Christ

In spite of their apparent differences both Roman Catholicism and Calvinism with their views of baptism have really belittled or annulled its saving significance. The Roman Catholic practice of baptizing and the unconscious dying shows a lack of discrimination on their part. The Christianization of the South American Indians among other things shows a lack of appreciation for the saving activity of Jesus Christ in baptism which is connected with his cross. Baptism frequently becomes little more than magical water. But today there seems to be a change among them.<sup>20</sup> Our Reformed friends look upon baptism as an appendage that is as useful as a person's appendix — fine if you have it, nothing lost if you do not. Now I am not saying that baptism is in all cases *absolutely necessary*, and I am not now saying that God cannot include individuals into His kingdom through other means. But I am saying that it is God's plan that through baptism the life, death, and resurrection of Christ should be of benefit to the believer. Baptism is in fact the foundation of the new life in Christ because baptism is the connecting link between what God has done in Christ and our lives which today are dedicated to his purposes. The foundation for baptism is the cross of Christ and his empty tomb, God has also taken these holy events and put them into baptism so that wherever this baptism is applied, these events are a present reality for the faith of the believer,

A quick glance at the Gospel of Matthew will show that the institution of baptism is placed directly after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>21</sup> In fact, according to Matthew's Gospel the most prominent recorded words of our Lord after His resurrection have to do with baptism. By placing these words at this junction, Matthew has carefully shown that the power of baptism can never be divorced from what Christ has done. Perhaps some of you are acquainted with the orchestration piece called *The Moldau* by Smetana. It is a piece of music based on a stream that flows through Czechoslovakia. The music approximates the flow of the stream. The river starts out as a little creek and as the creek grows

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<sup>20</sup> Typical of the Biblical renewal of baptismal theology in the Roman Catholic Church is the translation from the French into the English of the symposium entitled *Baptism in the New Testament* (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1956), J. Duplacy in the article "Salvation by Faith and Baptism in the New Testament" (pp, 113-158) states categorically that both faith and baptism are necessary for salvation, (p. 123),

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 26-28 contains the Passion, Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ,

into a stream and the stream into a river, there are more pieces in the orchestra playing. Of course, the finale with a full orchestra is the flowing of the river to its end. Matthew has produced a similar effect. What began as a small trickle with Abraham comes to a smashing conclusion in the resurrection of Christ and the inclusion of the nations through baptism. According to Matthew, the basis of the kingdom is the work of Christ and through Baptism, the work of Christ is spilled into the sea of humanity, as a river empties into the ocean. All the other Gospels build up to a crescendo at the resurrection and taper off with references to the post-resurrection experiences and appearances. Not so with Matthew, for him the resurrection and baptism form the crescendo and the finale, it is because of what Christ did, that baptism has power to join people to the kingdom of God as disciples.

Therefore, the application of baptism to the individual always presupposes that the new life is directly related to all the things that Matthew has recorded in the previous chapters. The agony of the Garden. The betrayal by Judas. The denial of Peter. The trials before the high priests and Pontius Pilate. The rejecting of Jesus and the choosing of Barabbas. The scourging of Jesus. The dreadful walk along the Via Dolorosa. The nailing to the cross. The lifting of the cross. The pain of the body. The tortured feelings of the soul and the tortured cries, with the agonizing surrender of the soul in death. The laying of the body in the tomb. All these must be considered the basis for baptism and its power, for there is no other power in baptism than the power of the cross. But with the negative power to destroy sin, there is also the positive power of the resurrection. This is a positive, victorious power, given to the Christian whereby he not only knows that His sins are forgiven, but he can begin to live a life without sin.

Paul, Peter, John and the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews make this same connection between baptism and the suffering and resurrection of Jesus Christ. But even if we only had the gospel of Matthew, these facts would be sufficiently clear from his manner of presentation. It should be noted that Christ did not institute baptism before Good Friday and Easter, but afterwards. The arrangement set by God for the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus came preaching, was built especially on what He did over this three-day period. And to make sure that baptism would not have a self-sufficient sacramental power all of its own, that would border on “hocus-pocus” whereby a few words are recited to gain a given result, or to avoid “a take it or leave it” attitude as some Baptists and Reformed suggest, he gave the command to baptize only after He had been resurrected. On this account, baptism must be considered as belonging to the Gospel and not to the law. Baptism is law in the church in the sense that Christ did command that we should do it; but it is not a law in the same sense that the Ten Commandments are law. These are laws that drive us to despair. But baptism is always the gracious declaration of God that, based on what God has done in Christ Jesus, sins are forgiven so that His kingdom may grow. Thus preaching, cross, empty tomb and baptism all belong to the kingdom’s expansion plan of Jesus Christ.

What is inferred by Matthew by arrangement is discussed explicitly at length by St. Paul in Romans 6:3-5:

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Baptism here is clearly mentioned as the power of the new life. Baptism does not stand by itself, but it is the link between the Christian and the cross and the empty tomb. Without doing injustice to the ordinary sense of language, we might even say that in baptism the cross of Jesus Christ becomes contemporaneous for the Baptized with the act of applying the water. Perhaps we could state this proposition in the reverse and say that we are made contemporaries with Christ and His cross. Paul’s language could be paraphrased to say that baptism is the hand by which God overcomes the centuries of time which separate us from this event and, by this hand, places us with Christ on his cross. This seems to be more than just suggested by St. Paul’s language, since baptism is a baptism into Christ’s death. Baptism places our bodies alongside of him in his sacred tomb and which his resurrection we are also raised. Later below, I would like to discuss what this action associated with baptism effects. These effects are clearly spelled out by St. Paul. But here it is enough to show where the power of baptism rests. This same thought is repeated by St. Peter:

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit; in which he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to him.”<sup>22</sup>

The relationship between the new life as it is based on Christ and as it is based in baptism must be clearly understood in order to avoid confusion. To say that baptism is the basis of the new life in Christ and that the cross and resurrection are the basis of the new life in Christ might appear to be mutually exclusive. But when we say that Christ saves and that baptism saves, we must distinguish between the function of each, the work of Christ as the propitiation for sin is the absolute basis of the new life. What is said of Christ cannot necessarily be said of the word or of baptism, Because God has been reconciled through the death of Christ. He is able to offer forgiveness or any of the other blessing radiating from

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<sup>22</sup> 1 Peter 3:18ff

the cross. Baptism, on the other hand, is the instrument through which this forgiveness is offered to the individual. Christ offers us the new life because he is the absolute cause. Baptism offers us the new life or gives us the new life because of its instrumental nature.<sup>23</sup> Unless we make this distinction, baptism becomes a sacramental orphan who like Melchizedek is without father or mother.

There are other passages which allude to baptism is dependency on Christ's work. One of the more unique events of the crucifixion happened when the soldier with his lance drew water out from the side of Jesus,<sup>24</sup> "But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness — his testimony is true, and he knows he tells the truth — that you may also believe."

If this section appeared in the Gospel of Luke, we could explain any real doctrinal significance away, by saying that according to Paul, Luke was a physician<sup>25</sup> and that things like this ordinarily don't happen to corpses. But we have here something which is more than simply biologically astounding. Otherwise, how would you account for the strong affirmation or oath taken by John in the immediately following verse that he himself saw these things, that his testimony is true, and because of this testimony a person should be led to faith or strengthened in his faith?

Here John is telling his readers, all of whom have undoubtedly been baptized, that their baptism has its roots in the sacrificial death of Christ and his going to the Father. Some people have taken the blood to refer to Holy Communion and the water to baptism. This seems less plausible since John never explicitly mentions Holy Communion nor its institution, but he does frequently mention baptism.

One of the technical terms for baptism in the writings of John is "water."<sup>26</sup> John 1:26 mentions that the Baptist baptizes with water. Jesus says to Nicodemus in the third chapter that "unless a man is born again of the water and the Spirit, He cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The order of words in John 19:34 also suggest that before baptism could offer all of heaven's gifts, the sacred blood would first have to be spilled. The words of John are "and at once there came out blood and water." This is a historical act with obvious symbolism. Now that the blood of Christ had been spilled and offered as the propitiation, a new life becomes possible for everyone through Baptism. The Father now is willing to receive men into a new relationship with Him because His wrath has been appeased, the means by which men enter into this relationship is the water of baptism.<sup>27</sup>

There seems to be a cross reference to this occurrence in another writing of John.<sup>28</sup> "This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with water

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<sup>23</sup> In the New Testament cause is referred to by a dative of agency and instrumentality by the genitive. According to the terminology of the Lutheran theologians, Christ is the *causa efficiens* of salvation and baptism is a *causa instrumentalis*.

<sup>24</sup> John 19:34f.

<sup>25</sup> Colossians 4:14

<sup>26</sup> J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van De Vegt N.V., 1962), pp. 77f.

<sup>27</sup> Cf, also the strong connection between blood and Baptism in Romans 5:9f. and Romans 6:1ff..

<sup>28</sup> 1 John 5:6ff.

only but with water and the blood. And the Spirit is witness because the Spirit is the truth, There are three witnesses, the Spirit, the water and the blood; and these three agree. "This passage forbids making baptism into a "sacramental orphan," By a "sacramental orphan" we refer to the Roman Catholics for whom baptism sometimes is administered in sacramental magical isolation or to the Reformed who do not really consider baptism to be an integrate part of the entire plan or system of salvation.

John makes the emphatic point that Christ did not come with water only but also with the blood. There was one who came only with the water, and He was John the Baptist. It was he who confessed that he only baptized with water. Now Christ did not negate the baptism of water, but the basis of the baptism of the water would be Christ's own baptism of blood. Those who have received the benefits of baptism of blood through the baptism of water have the Holy Spirit confessing to them by faith and bearing testimony by faith that these things are true. John is no different in his approach from Paul. Both see the death of Christ as the absolute foundation of the Christian life, which then is mediated by baptism to the believer. Below I will discuss the relationship of faith to this entire action and some concrete results of this entire action, However I would like to point out that in the immediately preceding action St. John discusses the love of God as keeping His commandments and that we are enabled to do this through faith which according to John is the victory which overcomes the world.

There is one other reference to which I would like to refer before closing this section that Baptism as the basis for the new life is rooted in the atoning work of Jesus Christ. The last reference is Hebrews 10:19-22.

Therefore, brethren since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

What the writer of the Book of Hebrews says about baptism's action is very closely related to that of Martin Luther in the Small Catechism that "Baptism is not simple water" and that "it is indeed not the water that does these great things but the word in and with the water," For both Luther and the writer to the letter to the Hebrews there is a double action in baptism. As the water is applied to the body, there is a simultaneous action on our spiritual or noncorporeal part. For as our bodies are washed through the pure water of baptism, our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience, The reference here in Hebrews is that the recipient of baptism now has a clear conscience before God because his guilt has been taken away through this sacrament. Here again we must supply an answer to the question, "who or what is really responsible for justification in the individual?" this feeling is that now, before God, he is completely innocent.

The writer to the Hebrews, as do Paul, Peter, and John, places the power of baptism in the proprietary work of Christ. The one great contribution of the Letter to the Hebrews is that it is very descriptive of the entire process of the atonement. We as high priests enter God's sanctuary with the sacrificial blood of Christ, as did the high priest in the old covenant with the blood of goats. The Christian may doubt whether he is permitted to do this great thing of entering God's majestic presence with Christ's blood, The answer to the reader is "of course" because our bodies have been washed with water — that is the water of Baptism.

Our thesis in this section of the paper has been that the basis of the new life for the Christian is not baptism as an isolated sacramental rite; but Baptism is and can be the basis for the new life because it is firmly rooted in Christ's death and resurrection,

### III Baptism as a Revelatory Event Based on the Work of Christ Intends to Give new Life to Men *Who Are in Sin*

If the positive presupposition of baptism is the work of Jesus Christ, the negative presupposition for this sacramental action is that man is a sinner. The new life cannot begin in an individual until he has renounced the former life of sin, a life not dedicated to God's purposes but to Satan's. On this account, the reference in our rite of baptism that both child and adult should renounce the devil, and all his works is not only sanctioned by the long tradition of the church, but it has a firm biblical basis. No one can begin the new life in baptism unless he is willing to put his former way of doing things.

This is already indicated in the Old Testament where Abraham having entered into a new relationship with God in order to the kingdom of salvation, had to renounce his original homeland with the influence of the pagan gods and idols. God moved him to Canaan to show the kind of radical change that was going to occur in his life.<sup>29</sup> The radical change from the old life to the new life is perhaps demonstrated in the Gospel of Matthew. Proving something from Matthew has the disadvantage in that doctrinal explanations in the Gospels are not as plentiful as they are in the Epistles especially St. Paul's epistles, nevertheless since baptism is first commanded in Matthew and also there recorded, we must see how baptism fits into Matthew's whole line of thought. The first two chapters of this Gospel is directed to the thought that Jesus is the king of God's new kingdom, which is an extension and a continuation of the kingdom originally established in David, Jesus is several times identified as David's son and heir. That his kingdom will be opposed by Satan is taught by Herod's deep hatred for the Christ Child. Herod is in fact the personification of Satan's attacks on God. Thus, From the very beginning of the Gospel to the end we see the opposition of Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom, of course, the final triumph of God's kingdom is God's proclamation that Jesus Christ, his Son, is the king both from the cross of his

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<sup>29</sup> Though Baptism is much more than circumcision, Baptism certainly includes the requirements, demands and blessings of circumcision as a minimum. To state it in another way, Baptism would hardly be less than circumcision. Cf. Colossians 2:10f. where Baptism is called the circumcision made without hands and the circumcision of Christ.

agony and through the victory of the resurrection. The message of the kingdom of God comes to those who, being in the kingdom of Satan, are bound to sin.<sup>30</sup>

The first words which we meet after chapters one and two, where Christ is established as David's heir and where his life is spared from Herod, are the words of John the Baptist: "Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand," Though the baptism of John is not the baptism of Christ, Christian baptism includes everything that John's baptism included and it is an extension of John's baptism.

One of the outstanding features of John's baptism is that being baptized by him meant the individual had to confess his sins. Matthew 3:6 "and they were Baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." Those who are inquisitive about this baptism are called a brood of vipers who, if they do not enter the new life, will meet the wrath of God, sin is of such a corrupting nature that the axe is laid to the root of the tree. If baptism is a necessary and vital part of God's plan of salvation, then sin is a "root" problem. Sin is not simply sins which the individual does; but it is a corruption of the entire human nature. The repentance needed is not only a pruning activity, as if there were only a few rotten apples on a few of the limbs; but the repentance needed is the acknowledgment that we as individuals and as a race are in our basic constitution turned away From God, This situation is so unacceptable to God that He lays the ax to the root and that every bad tree will be thrown into the fire. This radical difference between the old life under sin and the new life connected with John's Baptism will not in any way be diminished by Christ and His Baptism, in fact, the demands will be even more severe. He who Baptizes with the Holy Spirit gathers the wheat on the winnowing floor and the chaff he burns with an unquenchable fire.

Perhaps the classical reference between the old and the new life is made in the Gospel of John in the conversation of our Lord with Nicodemus.<sup>31</sup> The condition of every man is that he is born of the flesh and under sin and Satan says, "For what is born of the flesh is flesh." Now when Jesus refers to flesh, He is not referring to our bodies but is referring to man who instead of seeking God's glory seeks His own honor and glory.<sup>32</sup> Before a man may enter the life of the Spirit, he must renounce the life of the flesh. "For what is born of the flesh is flesh and what is born of the spirit is spirit." Baptism has a universal dimension because sin has universal dimensions. All men are born under the flesh and are subject to God's condemnation Since it is impossible for one man to serve two masters, he must

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<sup>30</sup> Renouncing Satan has a definite place in the Baptismal liturgy because of his prominence in Matthew's Gospel. Consider that according to this Gospel, Christ begins His ministry with the temptation in the wilderness. For a similar reason exorcism can also be included for Biblical reasons. Either a person is filled with the Holy Spirit or the unclean spirit, Satan. Scriptures know of no third possibility, Either a person is a son of God or he is a son of the devil. Exorcism in the rite of baptism does not have isolated power, but it is part of the one word of God, powerfully present, in baptism. Exorcism does not presuppose that the candidate is extra ordinarily demon possessed. Consider the alternative. The person possessed by the Holy Spirit does not have to possess the more recognizable gifts of speaking in tongues, healing, etc., of the Holy Spirit.

<sup>31</sup> John 3

<sup>32</sup> The man without God is the perverse individual, because he denies the very purpose of his existence to serve God.

renounce citizenship in the kingdom of the flesh which is the kingdom of Satan. When a person accepts citizenship in our country, he must renounce allegiance to any other government and any other foreign prince. Only at that time is his citizenship confirmed in our country. Thus baptism, whereby we enter the new life of Christ, demands that we renounce the devil and all his evil works. This is the old Kingdom. Those who refuse the demands, and the gift of the Spirit in baptism are those who are called the “lovers of darkness”, who hate the light and do evil works.<sup>33</sup> Now, not everyone given a chance to enter the kingdom of God or of heaven takes the opportunity. The rich young man will only enter God’s kingdom under the condition that he can keep his own allegiance and because of this he goes away sorrowful.<sup>34</sup> Those who were baptized by John the Baptist also desired a type of double allegiance. John’s words of warning seem to indicate this.<sup>35</sup> That renunciation of sin before entering the kingdom through baptism is made obviously and manifestly clear in the book of Acts beginning with the first Christian Baptism held under the auspices of St. Peter.

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified.”  
Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and says to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?”  
And Peter says to them, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>36</sup>

The words that “they were cut to the heart” indicate their realization that they’re putting the Lord’s Christ to death was a severe sin. “Cut to the heart” means more than a mere moral resolve, but it means that their entire nature was involved. Paul is told to arise and wash away his sins.<sup>37</sup> In Romans 6 where the connection is made between baptism and Christ’s atoning work, the baptized believer is told that he is dead to sin and to continue in sin would deny Christ and his baptism. Baptism signifies that this old life of sin is not only renounced but that for the believer it must be considered a life which is now dead. “So that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father: we too might walk in newness of life.”

This renouncing of the former way of life which is part of the total act of baptism is a negative aspect. This is quite obvious. But unless it is included in our theology of baptism, then the gifts which baptism gives, especially the gift of new life, loses some of its glory. Wherever people do not take sin seriously as a corruption of the human nature, implanted in humanity through the sin of Adam, then the glorious gift of baptism is made less glorious and sometimes even unnecessary, Christian denominations which do not Baptize children, for

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<sup>33</sup> All this is discussed at length in John 1,

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 19:16-22.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 3:7, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

<sup>36</sup> Acts 2:36-38.

<sup>37</sup> Acts 22:16.



example, have not only a very low opinion of what Baptism can really do but they have a rather optimistic viewpoint of human nature. To speak of innocent children and to use other humanistic terminology hardly redounds to the glory of God's revelation in Baptism. It is hardly coincidental that those groups which speak of the ability of the human nature to do good, also do not include Baptism as a necessary part of salvation. They might include Baptism, but it is reinterpreted as a "law of Christ."<sup>38</sup>

The command to baptize is found at the end of Matthew's Gospel. This is the Gospel with the story of Christ's kingdom defeating Satan's kingdom. This is the story of how men have switched their allegiance from Satan to Christ — or they have failed to make the decision. The sign that a man is no longer in bondage to Satan but that he is a free man under Christ is that He has been baptized. Baptism is the farewell to the old life. It is like the small part of the hourglass where the sand passes from the upper part to the lower. It is the document of citizenship in the new kingdom and the statement of renouncing the old kingdom. It is the narrow gate that must be walked; It is the path which the lost sheep must walk. It is the broom that finds the lost coin. It is the bridge connecting two nations at war. It is the promise of victory.

#### IV. Baptism as a Revelation of God to Create New Life is Intended for All Men

The great section on the universality of sin and the universality of grace is, of course, the fifth chapter of Romans. The universality of sin corresponds to the universal promise of God's grace. St. Paul writes: "Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men."<sup>39</sup> This section on the universality of sin and grace is directly followed by Romans chapter 6, which contains probably the best developed baptismal theology in all the New Testament. The "all" who have sinned can *all* receive the promise of grace, and they are "all" potentially entitled to baptism, But the universality of the baptismal command has roots that are even pre-New Testament. it was never God's intention that salvation should be limited to one certain group of people. Even though Israel was the peculiar people of God chosen for his own purposes, their fellowship was never totally exclusive nor was membership an impossibility for those of the nations. In discussing the universal character of baptism, keep two things in mind. One, even though we are not Jews, but Gentiles who have boon grafted into the tree, we are nevertheless entitled to baptism and its blessings. And the second thought is this, that we as a church have been placed under the baptismal obligation to make disciples of all nations. Perhaps this second thought concerning obligation would fit better in the chapter discussing how baptism works in the congregation.<sup>40</sup> But for the sake of unity, it would be better to discuss the universal aspects of Baptism as a church obligation here.

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<sup>38</sup> 1 John 5:6ff.

<sup>39</sup>Romans 5:18.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. chapter VII, "Baptism is the Basis of the New Life of the congregation."

Abraham was called not to be totally isolated from the rest of humanity. Abraham was not called so that God would have grace on him alone and display his wrath to the rest of the world. But Abraham was called so that through him, God might bestow blessings to the entire world. The universality of grace for the Old Testament Scriptures is not an afterthought by either the writers of the Scriptures or of God. It was not added by enlightened prophets who sneered at the priestly religion. It was not picked up by Jews, who by chance came into contact with Gentiles with the passing of time and then wondered about the salvation of those not Jews.

But the express purpose of Abraham's call was that through him all the nations could be blessed. The first call of God to Abraham included these words: "And I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing ... and by you will all the families of the earth be blessed."<sup>41</sup> Thus, according to the original covenant made by God with Abraham, the Hebrew nation, the descendants of Abraham, was not intended to exclude but rather include other nations. Abraham was chosen not to exclude the world but to include it. This mentioning of the nations is not found very frequently in the Old Testament in connection with blessings, but it is included in the first covenant with Abraham, a covenant sealed through circumcision.<sup>42</sup> Thus, when our Lord includes "all nations" under the mark of the new kingdom which is baptism, He is not introducing a new element into theology, but he is only restating a command included in the old covenant. A brief look through the Old Testament will indicate that God's kingdom was open to others than Israelites or the descendants of Jacob. Ruth, Rahab the harlot, and Uriah the Hittite, the first husband of Bathsheba, are a few examples of Gentiles included in the old kingdom. Perhaps a better example is the repentance and the conversion of the city of Nineveh by the prophet Jonah, since this is expressly mentioned by our Lord.<sup>43</sup> Here is the case of an entire nation benefiting from the covenant made originally with Abraham.

The universality of baptism for all men is taught in no place more clearly than in Matthew 28:19, The words "all the nations" is immediately followed by the word "baptizing." The command to take baptism to all nations in the service of adding people to the kingdom is a direct command of our Lord and since Matthew includes these words as the last words of our Lord and of His Gospel, they are spoken with double exclamation points. The word for "nations" which in the Greek is ἔθνη and corresponds to Hebrew גוים was severe and harsh sounding in the ears of the Jewish disciples of our Lord who first heard these words and of the Jewish readers of St. Matthew who first read these words. Matthew's Gospel is intended primarily for the Jews.<sup>44</sup> Its purpose is not only to convert them to faith

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<sup>41</sup> Genesis 12:3.

<sup>42</sup> Luther considered this to be *the* most important covenant.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew, the Gospel For the Jews, mentions all these individuals.

<sup>44</sup> A very early date for this gospel is suggested by the strong interest it has for including the Gentiles in a kingdom with Jewish origin. It might have been written around the time of the Council of Jerusalem, which was held in or around the year 45 AD. It would appear that Matthew wants to present the Jewish Christians material from the life of our Lord, showing that even during His ministry Gentiles were being included in the Kingdom. A late date for this gospel seems

in Jesus as the Christ but also to make them aware of God's original promise to their forefather that people, other than Jews must be included with them in the kingdom.

Now bearing in mind that Matthew closes his Gospel by linking baptism and the non-Jewish population of the world, consider how Matthew has been building up to this crescendo. Matthew is the one who includes the coming of the Gentile wise men from the east. He has the story of the Roman centurion who has more faith than anyone else in Israel. He has the story of the Canaanite woman, of whom he says "woman, great is thy faith." And Matthew includes these startling words that "many shall come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness."<sup>45</sup> The true sons of Abraham are not those who have Abraham as a father. But the true sons are those who submit themselves to the baptism of John and then subsequently to the baptism of Jesus. These are those whom St. Paul calls "the spiritual sons of Israel."<sup>46</sup> Matthew mentions these incidents of the Gentiles throughout his Gospel to serve his final purpose in the last verses of the final chapter, including the Gentiles in the baptismal blessings. If Gentiles worshipped the Infant Lord in Bethlehem, Gentiles are held up as the best examples of faith, if the Gentile centurion standing at the cross of Christ is the only one capable at that moment of acknowledging that Jesus is the Son of God, then the Gentiles certainly must be included in the new messianic kingdom, and they are therefore entitled to receive baptism.

In the mind of a Jew, the Gentile or the גויים were popularly considered in the class of subhuman beings, with which the respectable religious people did not associate. The tax collectors were ostracized because of their Gentile contamination. The Jews, who crucified Christ, did not go into the court of the Roman governor to avoid contamination for the celebration of the Passover, even a great man like St. Peter did not have firm convictions about the full inclusion of Gentiles in a kingdom that was originally intended for Jews.<sup>47</sup>

The command to baptize gives the church definite missionary responsibilities. When the Jew who heard the command of the Lord and read the words of Matthew that he was to go to the Gentiles or גויים, this was a shocking command and even more shocking news. For him it was not simply intellectual information to go to non-Jews, but it meant to go to people who are not as you are. God had given the Jews very stringent laws concerning their worship and behavior. These Ceremonial and civil laws did not make the Jew holy but kept him separate. They may be compared to preventative medicine. They gave the Jews a sense of national and religious. Identity for the purpose of keeping them away from the

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hardly possible, since by the time of the imprisonment of Paul, (circa 68 AD) the church was chiefly Gentile and character and apologetic writing in behalf of the Gentiles at this time would have little more than historical value.

<sup>45</sup> Mathew 8: 11.

<sup>46</sup> Romans 8 and 9. Cf. Also, Matthew 3:9, "And do not pursue to say to yourselves, we have Abraham as our father. For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham."

<sup>47</sup> Cf. the account of Cornelius Acts 10.

polytheistic practices of their neighbors. Thus, the Jews prayed, dressed, ate and conducted themselves in the same way. To ensure more uniformity, they added a few of their own laws — not commanded by God. The command to baptize the nations would mean putting aside these customs. For them it would be a cultural upheaval. A perfect example of one caught in the bind was St. Peter who preached to the Gentiles but ate like a Jew with the Jews.<sup>48</sup> This caused offense in the church among the Gentiles, especially, because it was difficult to determine from Peter's actions whether the command to include the Gentiles in the kingdom through Baptism was really a sincere command.

Now we might interpret the words of our Lord to make disciples of all nations as to what we do in our work on home missions. After all, it can be reasoned that the overwhelming majority of people whom we approach are non-Jews. This is not a totally satisfactory approach, because it is too comfortable for us. To make disciples through baptism out of the Gentiles should be interpreted by the church to mean to make disciples not only of people who are like us culturally, but more of people who really differ greatly from us. Of course, this causes the church to feel a little uncomfortable and to squirm, but this is not too unusual when you think of Peter. If the rock man, the first of the apostles, and the first preacher of the church did a little squirming around trying to wriggle out from the clear commands of the Lord, we should not be surprised if we at times should have some of the same feelings. Instead of feeling guilty, the church should strengthen herself in such a way that she can fearlessly proclaim the Gospel to those who are not like us and, through baptism, extend the Kingdom.

Matthew, who gives the command to baptize the nations, does not give us any examples of how this actually was practiced. However, Luke who gives us the story of the growth of the kingdom, tells us how thorough Baptism the kingdom of Christ extended out over the kingdoms of this world. Acts 2:5 tells us about the Jews from every nation under heaven who heard the news, (on that first Pentecost) and through Baptism received the kingdom. Acts 8 expands this theme a little further and includes Samaritans who were partly Gentile and partly Jewish. "They believed Philip as he preached the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ (and) they were baptized, both men and women."<sup>49</sup> With the baptism of Cornelius by Peter in the port city of Joppa we have the baptism of a person of whom we can be absolutely assured that he was a Gentile. The story of the rest of Luke is how Paul through the preaching of the Gospel and through baptism joined Gentiles to the kingdom of God in Asia minor, in Greece and Macedonia, and in Italy. Some of the more prominent Gentiles recorded by Luke as being baptized are the jailer of Philippi and Lydia the seller of purple.

Of course, the practice of St. Paul of baptizing both Jew and Gentile found its way into the theology of the epistles, The Epistle to the Romans with its rather detailed baptismal theology also includes the section discussing the relationship of the Jew and the Gentile in the kingdom, Matthew, Luke and Paul all develop the promise made to Abraham that all people could be included in the Kingdom. The Jew would have preference, but the salvation, sealed through circumcision and

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<sup>48</sup> Galatians 2:11f.

<sup>49</sup> Acts 8:11.

baptism, is intended for both the Jew and the Greek. What is implicit in Romans concerning the universality of baptism is quite explicit in Galatians 3:27f: “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to the promise,” There are other aspects of the universality of the baptism command that might appear too obvious to mention, but they might warrant some mention. Not only does baptism have the power to create new life regarding no national distinctions or cultural differences, but it works without discrimination to distinctions of sex, economic status, and age.

The reference to the distinction of sex is hardly worth mentioning in our society where women suffragettes have worked for about a century now. I really don’t think that this is a problem for the church, but what is taken for granted in our society about the equal rights of both men and women is not so in many cultures today and definitely not so among the Jews. We know that the pious Jewish boy was taught by his mother to pray to be thankful that he was not born a girl. The rite of circumcision has obvious sexual limitations, but it was not God’s intention that the kingdom should be limited. The Old Testament contains the stories of many pious women. Think for example of the pious Jewish maid who was instrumental in the conversion of Naaman, the Syrian general, who was healed from his leprosy.<sup>50</sup> Discrimination regarding God’s grace which was attached to the kingdom and to baptism must have been somewhat of a problem in the early church, otherwise St. Paul would not have mentioned it. “For in Christ Jesus you are all the sons of God through faith.” For as many of you as were Baptized into Christ have put Christ on ... for there is neither male nor female.”<sup>51</sup>

Paul here is not removing the natural orders of society which are based on the natural orders of creation.<sup>52</sup> Baptism and its gift of a new life in Christ turns back through history to the fall of the man and his curse with the subsequent further subordination of women to the man. Baptism now declares that *in respect to what God gives through Baptism* this distinction is no longer valid. Now St. Paul is not speaking to the question of how society should be structured, but to the question of the receiving grace. Since the command to Baptize the nations is you’ve been immediately following the appearance of Jesus to the women and since they are told to find the disciples, they also are included among those who are to be Baptized and also are commanded to participate in the missionary work of the church.

The next distinction mentioned in the New Testament is the economic one. Strange as it might seem, in regard to the economic distinction the poor are more capable of the new life in baptism than are the rich. Matthew, which is the Gospel of the kingdom of heaven, a kingdom entered through Baptism, also contains the discourse of the rich young man who, in sorrow, leaves Jesus because he cannot have both his riches and the kingdom of heaven. After the rich young man leaves, Jesus says, “Truly I say to you it will be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I tell you it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a

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<sup>50</sup> 2 Kings 5:1-5

<sup>51</sup> Galatians 3:26f,

<sup>52</sup> It is somewhat ridiculous to speak of the tragic separation of the sexes, as does the late Paul Tillich.

needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God,” Providing a solution to this difficulty, Jesus is quick to respond that “With men this (salvation) is impossible, But with God all things are possible.”<sup>53</sup>

Now why is it harder for a rich man to enter heaven than, for example, a poor man or a middle-class one? Now it should be said from the outset that within the kingdom we find both the rich and the poor. Many rich people were baptized. Lydia the seller of purple was wealthy, and the Ethiopian eunuch must have had a chauffeur — otherwise he was not keeping his eye on the road as he read the prophecy of Isaiah.<sup>54</sup> St. Paul says that among those who are baptized there is neither free nor slave.<sup>55</sup> The slave, who does not even own his own body, receives from baptism an equal grace with the rich man. Jesus not only says that all things are possible with God, a reference to rich men coming into the kingdom, but he demonstrates its possible by bringing them in.

But still the rich have a handicap. They are so surrounded by this world’s goods and thus they have to give up more for the kingdom of God. We can suppose that the rich young man had he followed Christ would have been baptized by one of Christ’s disciples since apparently this is the way things were done. He was excluded from this baptism because he could not stand giving up membership in Satan’s kingdom, where money, the mammon of unrighteousness, had full sway. Baptism meant for him that he would have to detach himself from this former allegiance, and this he could not stand to do. Thus baptism, giving us the new life, places certain commitments and demands on the individual, which if he cannot fulfill, disqualifies him from baptism and the new life. There were others who saw the demands of baptism and the new kingdom and acted accordingly. There was Zacchaeus, Joseph of Arimathea, Nicodemus and Barnabas among others.<sup>56</sup>

Up to now I have discussed distinctions which are not really points of contention among us, even though I think it worthwhile to see that Scripture does explicitly discuss them. The distinction according to age is not so lightly passed over. Does age present a deterrent to baptism working new life in the individual? Does the year of our birth hinder or help the implanting and the growth of the new life? Are some people, because of the number of years on earth, more apt than others to accept the kingdom of God which comes in Baptism? We have no idea about the age of the disciples or St. Paul, though we can make some approximations. Anna the prophetess was in her eighties, but besides this no ages are given in the New Testament. *Since the Scriptures are dreadfully silent on the entire issue of ages, especially the ages of those who receive the kingdom, I posit the proposition that the new life associated with the kingdom and Baptism is no way dependent or contingent on age.* And a brief look at either testament will show that people enter the kingdom of heaven without any discrimination of age.

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<sup>53</sup>Matthew 9:16-30.

<sup>54</sup>Acts 8:26-40.

<sup>55</sup>Galatians 3:26

<sup>56</sup> The total commitment of the individual which baptism demands is already set forth in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus discusses the impossibility of serving two masters. (Matthew 6:24). Because of this, references to Satan and anything connected with him have their proper place in the right of baptism.

Since the time of the Reformation there have been some within the Protestant tradition who have contended that baptism is a rite intended only for adults, conscious and thus supposedly capable of repentance and faith. Other evidence used to substantiate this opinion is that the New Testament gives no clear examples of children being baptized. Now, for several centuries this entire issue has laid dormant, being confined to books on comparative symbolics where the practice of baptism was listed as a difference between the Baptist groups and the paedobaptist groups.<sup>57</sup> But this issue has become again the center of theological controversy in our generation. Many paedobaptists are beginning to question infant baptism, Karl Barth has vigorously attacked infant baptism.<sup>58</sup> His son Marcus Barth, who is at the university of Chicago, has followed his father,<sup>59</sup> In England some Anglican clergy are refusing to baptize children. In Germany, especially in the Russian zone, there are Lutheran pastors who are baptizing children because they are by law required to do so, but who are leaving their own children unbaptized.

This issue is very important in regard to our essay assignment, because the question must be asked whether children are really capable of the new life in Christ or are we to exclude them? A number of books, on confirmation show that there is an interest here, most Christians have seen children performing certain good works and saying certain things that would indicate that they are to be included in God's kingdom and that such manifestations on their parts indicate that God's kingdom is working in them already. To come to any other conclusion would be monstrous. Thus, if a child does not really know what he is saying or doing when he makes an offering to Jesus in Sunday School or when he says the Lord's Prayer, then the child is virtually on the same level as a parrot whom we might train to do the same thing. If the works that children do and are taught to do are not sincere expressions of their membership in the kingdom, then, whether or not we like it, we have assisted in producing hypocrites. Because a hypocrite is by definition a person who acts a part, which is not really a manifestation of his personality, The person who plays Macbeth in the play of the same name by Shakespeare is not really a murderer because he happens to act out the murder of King Duncan on the stage. Applying this to our children, we could also conclude that what they do, they do merely because of parental or Sunday school authority or by rote, without any personal involvement. Most of us would shy off from such an unfair and sharp judgment. The child who prays to Jesus, whether it be around the age of one when he is beginning to talk or whether he or she be in school, do demonstrate that they have already been attached to the kingdom. However, the place of children in the kingdom does not rest on personal experiences or observations, even though they might be interesting and somewhat convincing. The question is whether the Scriptures include them in the kingdom and are they therefore not only permitted to be baptized but also entitled to it.

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<sup>57</sup>The term "pedobaptist" comes from two Greek words παιδίον, which means "child" and βαπτίζω, which means "to use water" as the term applies to those who baptize children, including infants. Baptist generally refers to one who baptizes only adults.

<sup>58</sup>Karl Barth, *Die kirchliche Taufe* (München: C. Kaiser, 1947).

<sup>59</sup>Marcus Barth, *Die Taufe - ein Sakrament?* (Zürich: Evangelischer Verlag, 1951).

The correct understanding of baptism must be based on a correct understanding of Matthew's Gospel, since it contains the baptismal command as the capstone of the entire presentation. What begins with Abraham in the first verse of the Gospel, ends with baptism in the last verses of the Gospel. This connection between Abraham and baptism is not only made by Matthew, but it is made by St. Paul in Colossians 2:11f. where he calls baptism the circumcision of Christ and in Galatians 3:27ff. where the baptized are called Abraham's offspring according to the promise. This connection between baptism and Abraham is further supported by St. Paul's calling the Philippians the true circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God.<sup>60</sup> What began with Abraham and was connected with a circumcision of the flesh is now continued among Christians who no longer need this circumcision, because they have received Baptism, which is the circumcision of Christ. The covenant made with Abraham is the prototype of the new covenant in Christ. One of the marks of the Abrahamic covenant is that all male children, regardless of whether they were of Jewish origin, or not, had to be baptized.<sup>61</sup> This was a commandment that God made binding on all the descendants of Abraham. While it can be said that circumcision did not make the covenant, failing to do so broke the covenant. "Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." This stringent requirement applied not primarily to converts, though there were converts from time to time, but to children born to Jewish parents. Thus, from the very beginning God included children in the kingdom and that even they could be held liable for breaking the covenant arrangement, What God said to Abraham is then repeated to Moses as a regulation for those, who want to attach themselves to the Hebrew nation.<sup>62</sup> Membership in the kingdom of God was not restricted to Jews or the descendants of Abraham, but it was restricted for male children by the rite of circumcision. If circumcision teaches us anything about Old Testament concept of children, it teaches us that they were included in God's kingdom with full membership.

They are objects of both God's wrath because of their unbelief and of God's mercy because of their repentance, Consider the city of Ninevah when Jonah preached, "Yet forty days, and Ninevah shall be overthrown," the author describes the response of the people in this way: "And the people of Nineveh believed God; they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them to the least."<sup>63</sup> Here the reference is not to height or size, but to age. All those people repented from the oldest to the youngest.<sup>64</sup> This is further substantiated by the last verse of the book where God says to Jonah that in Nineveh there are over 120,000

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<sup>60</sup>Philippians 3:3..

<sup>61</sup> Genesis 17:9ff..

<sup>62</sup>Exodus 12:48f.

<sup>63</sup>Jonah 3:4.

<sup>64</sup> The Hebrew word for the least is יָטֵף which is translated into the Greek as μικρός, a term used by Jesus for the youngest children. A Hebrew variant of יָטֵף is יָטֵף־אֶרְבָּא Which is used in Jeremiah 44:12. Here it also refers to the youngest child in the nation "from the least to the greatest" They shall die by the sword and by famine." Included here are all the Jews in Egypt who will not escape the destruction by God.



persons who do not know their left hand from their right hand,<sup>65</sup> This indicates that those who are at least under four years of age can be and are objects of his grace. That the kingdom in the Old Testament includes children, is further seen in the giving of the Ten Commandments where iniquity is visited to the children of the ungodly<sup>66</sup> and God makes it mandatory that the children be taught these commandments and the great revelatory events of God at every possible opportunity.<sup>67</sup>

In mentioning these events from the Old Testament, it is evident that the concept of children belonging to the kingdom is not something new with Christ or the Apostles, but it is part of the original covenant and kingdom relationship established through Abraham, verified in the Mosaic covenant, and exemplified in the practice of the prophets.

With the coming of Christ, the place of children in the kingdom is certainly not diminished, but further exalted. There is the mysterious salute of the unborn child of Elizabeth who jumps in the womb of his mother in greeting the unborn Lord, who is the king of the kingdom.<sup>68</sup> The Child Jesus is circumcised on the eighth day indicating that as the servant of God he attaches Himself to God's kingdom, not as a king, but as a faithful subject and child who must fulfill all righteousness, thereby setting for children an example that they should follow. Somewhere in between the ages one to two the infant Christ receives homage as a king from wise men who present him with royal gifts. This is the picture of the child king, which suggests that in the fulness of the kingdom children could participate as full members and thus also enjoy the new life. In that He grew in stature and wisdom and found favor both in the eyes of men and God shows that as the adult Christ is the picture of the new life for adults, so the child or infant Jesus is the picture or model of the new life for children.<sup>69</sup>

There is always a tendency to diminish the role of children in the kingdom and without saying it we look upon them as being ethically inferior to their much older progenitors. In fact, we find it a little uncomfortable to speak about child or infant sanctification or ethics. We shy away from attributing to them a new life in Christ. Without vocalizing it, we say to ourselves that baptism will only bring new life to them if they are confirmed.

Of course, as any pastor knows most children have more "new life" before confirmation Sunday than on Sundays after.<sup>70</sup> Since the new life in the Gospel of

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<sup>65</sup>Jonah 4:11.

<sup>66</sup>Exodus 20:5f.

<sup>67</sup>Joshua 4:1-7.

<sup>68</sup> Luke 1:44: "For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb leaped for joy."

<sup>69</sup> Luke 22:1. Compare 1 Peter 2:21. "Christ also suffered for you, leaving an example that you should follow in His steps." Christ in his infancy and childhood was already fulfilling the law for us, (the active obedience) and thus saving children from their sins. His submissiveness and obedience are models also for children. The words of Peter to follow Christ apply to all members of the congregation. Thus, they also apply to children.

<sup>70</sup> The European churches have a great statistical discrepancy between those confirmed and those who *ever* actually take Holy Communion. I have heard that the ratio in Germany is for every ten confirmed only one receives the sacrament. Though the American church might have better appearing statistics, confirmation, dropout problem is one still unsolved.

Matthew is connected with baptism, we must seriously consider whether children are worthy and fit recipients of baptism. Are they entitled to receive baptism and to begin the new life? In answering this question on whether children are entitled to new life in baptism, I believe it is necessary to go to the Gospel of Matthew because this is the Gospel of the kingdom — a kingdom that comes through baptism.

There are two entire sections in the Gospel of Matthew and in the Gospels of Mark and Luke that in some way discuss the relationship of children to the kingdom. Matthew 18 contains the placing of the child in the midst of the disciples, with Jesus saying that the child is an example of the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. It speaks about receiving the child in the name of Jesus with the threat of the millstone attached to it if we do not take this word of Jesus seriously. Followed is the account of the offense and the better choice of cutting off the hand and foot and the plucking out of the eye. We are also told that the angels of children constantly behold the face of the Father and here also is the story of the ninety-nine sheep and the lost lamb which is specifically identified as a child. Matthew 19 follows with the account of the disciples hindering the children from coming to Jesus and also the Rich Young man who is not able to receive the kingdom of God.

But in order to avoid a piecemeal approach whereby we just look at texts in isolated circumstances, we must study the flow of Matthew's Gospel from chapter 16 on. In chapter 16, Peter confesses Jesus as the Christ, the Son of the living God — a confession which is the foundation of the kingdom. Matthew 17 immediately goes into the account of the Transfiguration. Chapters 18 and 19 are devoted to children. Matthew 20 and 21 are the accounts of the preparations for entry into Jerusalem with the children singing in the temple. Jesus gives His approval by saying, "Have ye never read, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, thou have perfected praise?" The rest of the book deals with the events of Holy Week and Easter, culminating in the command to baptize the nations. Here in chapter 16, we see Matthew is building up a crescendo, beginning with the confession of Peter and then including the bringing of the children, the parables of the kingdom and ending with the crucifixion, resurrection and the command to baptize.

One of the more traditional ways of arguing for the inclusion of children or infants is that the command to Baptize is to show that the "nations" include children. This is good Old Testament theology because, in the cursing and blessing of the nations, the children are without exception included. This thought, however, is also verified by Matthew. Now it is frequently mentioned that in the Gospels, the children are not mentioned as being baptized. But it is not Matthew's purpose to list the names or persons or types of persons who have been baptized. The woman from the coasts of Canaan and the Roman centurion are held up as examples of great faith. Still, the Scriptures do not mention their being baptized or even their eligibility for baptism. Placing the baptismal command at the end shows that anyone who receives the kingdom is to be baptized.

Very few people are held out as worthy of emulation in the Gospels. Two of these, as already just mentioned, are the Roman centurion and the Canaanite woman, but there are others not frequently included, but which are definitely

included by Jesus. These are the children. The phrase “Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven” refers to sanctification, But the children are also held up as examples of conversion “Except ye be converted and become as little children, ye shall not enter the kingdom of heaven,”<sup>71</sup> To make the point of their kingdom membership, Matthew places an exclamation mark in the following chapter by including the account of the mothers’ bringing their children to Jesus for blessing. “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,”<sup>72</sup> Their being entitled to kingdom membership is made too frequently and too emphatically by Jesus for them to be excluded from God’s saving activity. Jesus Himself teaches they must therefore be capable of the new life, which Baptism gives.

When children are mentioned. So frequently in this connection, it becomes impossible to deny them what is obviously theirs. Consider the following points:

1. They are held up as those who receive the kingdom.
2. They are held up as examples of sanctification.
3. To receive the Christian child is to receive Christ because Christ is living in the child.
4. A special warning and punishment of the millstone and the being tossed into the sea are attached to those who offend the Christian child.
5. Jesus gives special instruction to those who by chance might possibly offend.
6. Children are identified with the lost for whom Jesus especially came to save in the parable of the Lost Sheep.
7. Matthew 19 has the famous words of Jesus to let the children come unto Him,

It seems as if our Lord here, with his many references to children, was already aware of the problem that the church would have with children and their place in the kingdom of God. Nobody has ever doubted the possibility of rich men entering the kingdom of heaven. Nobody thus ever denied the rich, a place in the kingdom, the opportunity to be baptized, or the opportunity for the new life which comes through baptism, If Jesus says we must become like children to come into heaven and the kingdom belongs to them, He says of rich men, “Verily I say unto you, that a rich man shall hardly enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for rich men to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples in their amazement answered, “Who then shall be saved?” Jesus answers, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” After Jesus had dealt with the children, there was no question about the possibility of their being included in the kingdom. But after the experience with the rich man there was some doubt,<sup>73</sup> If it is possible for a rich man who is encumbered with this world’s concerns to enter the kingdom, how much easier is it than for children, who are held up as examples,

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<sup>71</sup>Matthew 18:1-4.

<sup>72</sup>Matthew 19:13-15.

<sup>73</sup>Matthew 19:13-26.

Most will grant that the more mature children are capable of the new life in Baptism, but not the infants, However, the cross reference in Luke's Gospel which by the way is also followed with the account of the rich young man identifies these children are not of the school age variety, but of the just born variety. The Greek word used in Matthew and Mark is *παιδία*, which means children, in general. Luke, who in Colossians is identified as the good physician would naturally be more interested in the fact that those who received the blessing were not *just born infants*. *Βρέφος*, the word used means infant or unborn infant. Luke, who uses this word, also used it to describe the unborn fetus of John the Baptist in Luke 1:41, who salutes the Christ Child in the Womb of His mother Mary. So according to Luke, infants are brought to Christ, and to these belong the kingdom of God. Our point here is not to debate whether children are of themselves capable of the kingdom of God and hence also capable of the new life in baptism, which is the prerequisite for membership in this kingdom. Our point here is to show that Jesus includes them in the Kingdom and He works new life in them. The question which must be considered here is whether children, because of their kingdom membership, are entitled to baptism.

Jesus must have known that this would cause a problem in the church, because no other age category is singled out in the Scripture to receive so much special consideration. To the best of my knowledge, no one has ever protested the baptism of rich men. But according to the words of Jesus, their membership in the kingdom verges on impossibility. On the other hand, the children, including infants, are capable of the kingdom and of the new life.

There is a liturgical practice that has definite doctrinal overtones in our concept of baptism. Our rite of baptism includes the pericope of the blessing of the children. The question which I offer you is this: "Does the pericope of the blessing of the children belong to the rite of baptism?" Sometimes it is pointed out that baptism is nowhere mentioned in connection with what Jesus did with the children, and that to use the pericope of the blessing of the children is to quote something out of obvious context. However, those responsible for first using the pericope which probably dates back to the early church, did not take such a piecemeal approach to Scripture, this use of the pericope in the rite of baptism shows that the church has recognized the intent of our Lord to include them in the kingdom — a kingdom which is centered in baptism. The reason for their not being baptized by Jesus or John is that Jesus had not yet instituted Christian baptism whereby the full gifts of the Holy Spirit would be given. And the baptism of John was intended primarily for those who had resisted the will of God in their lives, but even regarding the Baptism of John the Baptist, children and whole families might have been baptized. It seems according to Jewish ritual entire families were ritually washed. But this matter of who received John's Baptism is more of a historical question.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Present contemporary answers to this question are given in Kurt Aland, *Die Säuglingstaufe im Neuen Testament und in der alten Kirche: eine Antwort an Joachim Jeremias*. Theologische Existenz heute, n. F., Nr. 86. München: C. Kaiser, 1961 and Joachim Jeremias, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*. The Library of History and Doctrine. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1962.

Recently New Testament scholars have pointed to an interesting comparison between the pericopes of the blessing of the children in all three synoptic Gospels<sup>75</sup> and two accounts of Baptism in the book of Acts. In all three Gospels you have the words “forbid them not,” “This same word “forbid” is used in connection with the Baptisms of the Ethiopian eunuch<sup>76</sup> and Cornelius, the Roman centurion<sup>77</sup> (κωλῦσαι), This similarity, based on the word “forbid” is hardly superficial. There was a tendency in the early church to limit the kingdom to the Jews. The baptism of Cornelius is significant because it shows that God was accepting people into the kingdom through baptism about whom some were having doubts. This exclusion of the Gentiles from the kingdom through baptism was a direct parallel to the disciples’ excluding the children when they were brought to Jesus. It may have been the word “forbid” was part of the early baptismal rite. The question would be worded based on the book of Acts something like this: “Can any forbid baptism to this person?” The answer regarding the children would be, “Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not for of such is the kingdom of God.”

Though Jesus does not baptize the children, he does touch them. One hardly believes that this was a kind tap on the head, But the blessing of God indicating God’s good favor was associated with the laying on of the hands. In an extended sense, we are told that the hand of the Lord was with John the Baptist from his youth up (Luke 1:66). Jesus heals through His hand (Mt 8:3 Mt 9:3). He saves Peter through the hand (Mt 14:31). And through the hand (Lk 7:14) Jesus raises from the dead. In the Old Testament hands were used for blessing the people and for the removal of sins (Lev 3:2, 8, 13). In the book of Acts, hands are associated with healing (Acts 19:11); but more important, they are associated with the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17), “Then laid they their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost.” Thus, the use of the hands by Jesus in blessing the children and the use of hands in the early church connected with baptism and the kingdom of God seem to indicate that it was the clear intention that they should be Baptized and thus receive the kingdom. From the point of view of three writers, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the pericope of the blessing of the children must have also suggested their Baptism.<sup>78</sup>

Leaving this question of the pericope of the blessing of the children, we should consider whether children were part of the apostolic ministry. There is admittedly a silence about their being baptized in the book of Acts, which is the story of the apostolic ministry. The argument from silence is never conclusive. If we worked according to this principle, we would have to exclude women from Holy Communion because there is no explicit reference to their receiving Holy Communion in the New Testament. We, however, can prove it from inference. Undoubtedly, all the members of the church at Corinth took Holy Communion. There must have been women in this congregation because St. Paul addresses

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<sup>75</sup>Matthew 19:13ff; Mark 10:13ff; Luke 18:15ff.

<sup>76</sup>Acts 8:36.

<sup>77</sup>Acts 10:47.

<sup>78</sup> As the writers penned these words about the children, they might have had one of one eye on the practice of infant baptism as it was already in use at the time.

them in regard to certain church problems. Hence, we conclude women received Holy Communion, Nevertheless, the Scriptures do not explicitly say that women received Holy Communion. We do not find such inferences offensive. Perhaps as many of you know, there has been for about the last decade or so a theological debate over whether children were baptized in the households of the New Testament, Typical examples are Lydia and her household (Acts 16:15); Crispus and his household (Acts 18:8) and the jailer at Phillipi and His household (Acts 16:33). These sections by themselves prove little, all we know is it was undoubtedly the practice of all the apostles to baptize entire families. Some of these families must have included children of all ages. It seems very improbable that of the countless households baptized by the apostles, all were without infants.

There are, however, other passages more conclusive to show that children were baptized. More important are the words of St. Paul before King Agrippa at Caesarea.<sup>79</sup> In this section St, Paul is telling Agrippa about his conversion on the Damascus Road and the change that it brought in his life. Paul then goes on to describe his missionary work as including children, “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses said should come.” Scripture is not particularly interested in the height or stature of man, except in the case of Zacchaeus and his tree climbing activities. It seems ridiculous that St. Paul would have told Agrippa that he preached to short and tall people. What St. Paul is saying is that his ministry includes both the very old and the very young. The Greek words here for great and small correspond to the words for great and young in Jonah 3:5, where the total population of Nineveh is included, by saying “the greatest of them even to the least of them.”<sup>80</sup>

Also, note in this connection that the word witnessing (μαρτυρούμενος) is used here. “Witnessing” should be better translated as “making disciples,” as in Matthew 28, “making disciples out of all nations” according to the command of Jesus includes the accompanying activities of both Baptism and teaching. Here St. Paul says that he is using this two-pronged approach wherever he is sent. And the objects of this activity are children, yes, even the very youngest of them. St. Paul told King Agrippa that part of his activity was the baptizing of children, they too are capable of the message of salvation which St. Paul says includes the suffering of Christ, His resurrection from the dead, and the proclamation of this message to both the people of God and the Gentiles.

Turning to one reference in the epistles, we see children are also included there as recipients and are specifically addressed.<sup>81</sup> “I wrote to you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning, I wrote unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one, I wrote unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father” Now it is true that John refers to all people in the congregation as little children, but the word for this is τέκνία. (1 John 2:1) In

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<sup>79</sup>Acts 26:22.

<sup>80</sup> See note 25 in this chapter. Particularly helpful is Otto Michel "Mikros", pp. 650-661, in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Herausgegeben von Gearhard Kittel Stuttgart: W Kohlhammer, 1942. V and IV.

<sup>81</sup>1 John 2:13.

the 1 John 2:13 passage, he uses the word *παιδιά*, the same word which is used to describe children who were brought in arms to Jesus. Thus, from the viewpoint of the Apostle John, children, the kind that can be carried in arms, are considered members of the congregation. For him, the congregation are those who have been born again of water and the Spirit. The congregation are those to whom Jesus comes not by water only but by water and the blood. The presupposition of the letter and of this passage in 1 John 2:13 is that the children, those carried in arms, have already been Baptized. For John, none could be members of the kingdom unless they had been born again of water and of the Spirit.

The one remaining aspect of the kingdom and children which must be discussed is the eschatological kingdom or the consummation of the kingdom in glory. If it can be shown that children are included in the kingdom of Jesus in glory, then there can be no doubt it is the intention of Jesus even to include them now in the kingdom of grace, a kingdom whose mark of citizenship is baptism. For if children can be included in the kingdom of glory which will surpass in splendor the kingdom of grace, how much more can we then now be received into the kingdom of grace and the new life associated with Baptism?

The picture of the eschatological kingdom is of course given in the book of Revelation. Here are pictured the fate both of the damned and of the saved. There are two eschatological kingdoms in the book of Revelation. The mark of one is the beast who blasphemes against the name of the Lord. Those who belong to him, in other words, the unbelievers, are marked as belonging to him since they do not have their names written in the book of life. In the retinue of the beast are, as the writer says, “both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond.”<sup>82</sup> Here the words for “small and great” are the same ones that appear in Paul’s speech before Agrippa and are the translation of the words that appear in Jonah describing the inhabitants of Nineveh. Here of course we must face up to the reality that some children will not be included in the kingdom of grace or glory. This nevertheless, is the obvious intent of John, the writer. To refer to size with the words “small and great” is not commonly done in Scripture. The word “small” meaning humble could hardly refer to one suffering in hell. The thought of the exclusion of the “small” or children from the kingdom should impel the church to greater missionary activity since it is quite obvious that some of them will be excluded from the new life in Christ given by baptism.

A more pleasant picture of the children as being part of the kingdom of the Lamb is included in the final chapters of the book. Chapter 18 tells the story of the destruction of Babylon or the punishment of the unbelievers. For her sins the city weeps and wails because she has killed the prophets and saints. The triumph of the kingdom of God begins in chapter 19 and continues to the end of the book. The song of victory is “alleluia, Salvation and glory and honor and power unto the Lord our God.” After this comes the cry from the throne for the saints to join in the celestial hymn, “And a voice came out of the throne saying, ‘Praise our God, all ye his servants, and ye that fear him, both great and small.’”<sup>83</sup> To this command the crowd of saints which includes both the great and small sings, in a

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<sup>82</sup>Revelation 13:6-16.

<sup>83</sup>Revelation 19:5.

voice approximating the voice of many mighty waters and thundering, “Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

Saints are pictured being older persons. But John says that both adults and children, the very oldest and the very youngest respond in these glorious hymns to the Lamb whose blood was shed for them. One last reference will suffice, John sees the dead standing before the throne of God. “And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were in the books, according to their works.”<sup>84</sup> The citizenship of heaven would have a membership reflecting the same variety of states of men as do the kingdoms of this earth and the kingdom of grace. The citizens of Nineveh include the great and the small; the citizens of the church include the great and the small; and the kingdom of Christ will include the great and small. Even the youngest children, according to John in the book of Revelation, will be judged according to the deeds written in the book of life. This is a universal judgment which does not take respect to age. I have gone to such great lengths in this point because when we speak of baptism as the basis of the new life in the kingdom of God that we do not exclude anyone whom God includes. The thought of children receiving the new life in baptism should be a help rather than a hindrance in our concept of the new life — because it will help us avoid making the new life simply one characterized by moralizing. The joy of the children in receiving the kingdom is exemplary for the Christian who also in Baptism has the new life.

#### V. Baptism Attaches People to the Kingdom so That by Faith they May Have to New Life

Any discussion of the new life in baptism must also be careful to include consideration of the relationship of faith and baptism to the new life. In discussing the coordination between faith and Baptism we are touching on one of the more difficult areas of theology. In the last century in Germany, the prevalent view among the theologians of the Erlangen School was that baptism gave its benefits to the baptized, whether he be adult or child, without the benefit of faith. Thus, one could be incorporated in the body of Christ, buried with Christ, risen with Christ, without faith.<sup>85</sup> Scripture uses very strong language in describing the benefits of baptism, and perhaps a very superficial reading of them would indicate that baptism gives blessings irrespective of faith.

The Erlangen Theologians reduced faith to a mere intellectual process. Through faith, I received news from the word of God that the blessings of baptism were working within me. This teaching on baptism became so coarse that an otherwise conservative theologian, like Franz Delitzsch, could say that Protestants, Catholics, Socinians and Unitarians were all members of the body of

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<sup>84</sup>Revelation 20:12.

<sup>85</sup>David P. Scaer, “The Doctrine of Infant Baptism in the German Protestant Theology of the Nineteenth Century” (Unprinted doctoral dissertation, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, 1963) pp. 73-156.



Christ by virtue of their Baptism. According to this view, baptism worked in the unconscious part of the individual like a seed in the soil. The preached word like the rain made this seed grow into faith. Now baptism performed these great works in the unconscious part of the individual apart from the existence of faith. This working of baptism was described as *ex opere operato*, which means simply because baptism was applied, baptism has to do these things.

Of course, these Lutheran theologians were obviously under the influence of Roman Catholic theology in their thinking. I only mention these things because a work entitled “Life: New Life in Baptism” might give the impression that whoever permits himself to be baptized will therefore, and thereby automatically have all the blessings that baptism has to offer.

An analogy would be a person standing under a shower — you cannot help but get wet. This “shower method of evangelization” has been used by the Roman Catholic Church in many of its mission fields. We know that baptism supposedly “Christianized” the South American Indians. Even today these people are sometimes more attached to their former pagan, ways than to the Gospel of Jesus Christ, In the “Christianization” of Europe, especially the western part, baptisms were performed *en masse* at the command of the local prince or chieftain who might have been converted to Christianity, The question of personal faith in any of these cases was relatively unimportant, to say the least. Germans have a word for these kinds of Christians, — “*Zwangchristen*,” Christians by compulsion. Even today, an occasional Lutheran might suggest that the proper way to do mission work is first to baptize, then to preach the Gospel. This has no basis in Scripture and if the experience of the Roman Church demonstrates anything, it will show that indiscriminate baptism without regard to faith will not create the new life, which is the promise of baptism. In this case, baptism is separated from faith. To the other extreme, more common among the Baptist bodies, faith is separated from baptism. Thus, although Baptists call themselves “Baptists” there are many in their congregations who have never been baptized.

There is this universal tendency in the church to make either baptism or faith superfluous. A tendency, less crass but definitely of Romanist leanings, is to baptize children on the basis of their future faith. This view is held by those who baptize children, both within Roman Catholic and Protestant churches. It is also a view that has found widespread acceptance in the Lutheran churches. In this section, we show that baptism and faith are coordinate presuppositions for the new life and that according to the plan of salvation, established by God and proclaimed by Jesus Christ, both Baptism and faith are essential.

Baptism is always an activity of the Triune God. Baptism is something which God does and belongs to his work. Faith, on the other hand, though created by the Holy Spirit, is nevertheless a work of man, but not a meritorious work. God never believes, but it is always the individual. Baptism is God’s instrument for appropriating grace to mankind, Faith is man’s implement whereby he gets a hold of this grace for himself. In baptism and faith, God and man meet. If there is a human and divine encounter anywhere, it is here in baptism where the faith of man takes for himself the gifts of God’s grace. Baptism is not absolute grace in the sense that baptism is the source, origin, and manufacturer of grace. Whatever

Christ did for our salvation — including his incarnation, birth, life, sufferings, death and resurrection — are put by God into baptism. Baptism’s purpose may be compared to a spiritual conveyor belt that crosses time to bring man what Christ did. Thus, baptism has no other content than Jesus Christ. On this account, baptism is truly and really a word of God. Whatever brings me to Jesus Christ is the word. Faith grasps hold of what baptism brings, namely Christ and His works, and makes it part of the very existence of the human being. Faith is the hand that lifts these gifts out of baptism and makes them part of our lives. Because of grace, Christ, God, the Holy Spirit, baptism and faith all take part in this activity. It is both proper and Scriptural to say that “grace saves us,” “Christ saves us”, “God saves us.” “The Holy Spirit saves us,” “Baptism saves us,” and even “faith saves us.” We can say all these things and still not be guilty of a contradiction. The one thing to which we must be alerted is that when we say that we are saved by Christ, baptism, etc. that we understand the function of each and that we do not confuse the different functions, Christ saved us because of His atoning death. When we say that the Holy Spirit saves us or that baptism saves us, we do not mean that either the Spirit or baptism made the atoning sacrifice. The activity and interaction of all these may be compared to a car traveling between two destinations. Needed to make the car run are carburetor, engine, wheels, battery and so forth, nevertheless each has its own function. Thus, also in the granting of salvation, God uses both baptism and faith, but they have their differing functions.

A casual reading of the New Testament will show this joint activity of both baptism and faith. “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.”<sup>86</sup> “Repent and be baptized ... so those who received his word were baptized.”<sup>87</sup> “But when they believed Phillip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God ... they were baptized.”<sup>88</sup> “The Lord opened her heart to give heed to what was said by Paul. And when she was baptized...”<sup>89</sup> “Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, and he was baptized at once.”<sup>90</sup> “Many Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized.”<sup>91</sup> The same thought is carried through in Paul’s epistles, “In Christ Jesus you are all sons of God through faith, for as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put Christ on.”<sup>92</sup> “One Lord, one faith, one Baptism.”<sup>93</sup> Romans 10:9f is said by some and probably rightfully so to refer to Baptism. “If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved, for man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips and so is saved.” In this passage the confession of the lips is associated with the confession made by the catechumen at

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<sup>86</sup>Mark 16:16

<sup>87</sup>Acts 2:38

<sup>88</sup>Acts 8:12

<sup>89</sup>Acts 16:41

<sup>90</sup>Acts 16:29ff.

<sup>91</sup>Acts 18:8

<sup>92</sup>Galatians 3:27

<sup>93</sup>Ephesians 4:5

the time of his baptism.<sup>94</sup> In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we also see the connection between baptism and Faith.

“Therefore, leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of Baptisms and the laying on of hands.”<sup>95</sup>

Also consider, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water,”<sup>96</sup> The New Testament shows that baptism and faith are correlatives in God’s saving activity. On this account, and because of a more careful examination of pertinent scriptural references, it must be stated that the new life in baptism is not possible without faith.

The baptism of John the Baptist was not the baptism which Jesus instituted after Easter. Everything that belonged to the baptism of John the Baptist belongs to Christian baptism. And the obvious purpose of John’s baptism was to create new life in those who received it — but it was not a new life without faith. Mark 1:4 describes John’s baptism, “John baptized in the wilderness and preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” This baptism did not merely involve the application of water to the body, but it signified that an inward change was demanded. His message was, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” To receive his baptism was to denounce one’s former ways in sin and to accept the kingdom of God.

Perhaps the preaching of John describes the inward condition necessary for baptism, more than any other preacher or writer of the New Testament. “Repent” means to do an about face and instead of serving your purposes to serve the purposes of God. Repentance includes contrition and belief, by contrition we renounce our former existence in sin and by faith we lay hold of the kingdom of God which is found in Jesus Christ. A superficial confession which does not involve our entire existence does not receive this baptism — because what does not become “converted” must meet the axe that is laid to the very foundation of our existence.<sup>97</sup> Fear and worry over God’s wrath without true faith, as was obvious with the Pharisees and Sadducees, who are called a generation of vipers, will not be sufficient. Baptism is therefore according to John the Baptist never a superficial or ecclesiastical rite without demanding a radical change within the individual, The message of John was so clear with its demands that a man turn from his sin and thus turn to Christ that even Herod was touched in his very existence. We do not have any individual references to the baptizing activities of Jesus and his disciples, even though we do know that they did engage in such

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<sup>94</sup>Oscar Cullmann, *Les premières confessions de foi chrétiennes* (Paris, second edition, 1948), pp. 14ff.

<sup>95</sup>Hebrews 6:1

<sup>96</sup>Hebrews 10:22

<sup>97</sup>Matthew 3:10

activity. This baptizing activity was coterminous with that of John's baptizing.<sup>98</sup> Perhaps the only incident before our Lord's resurrection that speaks specifically to this issue is the conversation of Jesus with Nicodemus that also appears in John 3, Jesus says to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God," Water in this context must refer to baptism. In the first chapter of John, John the Baptist is bringing this new birth through water and the Spirit with his baptizing activities. And in the rest of chapter three both John the Baptist and Jesus are baptizing in Jordan because of the abundance of water there. The presence of the Spirit suggests faith. Jesus parallels the new birth in the Holy Spirit with belief in heavenly things,<sup>99</sup> Subjecting oneself to John's baptism is not enough. There must be the new birth in the Spirit which is faith or belief in Jesus. The old life comes through natural procreation. The new life comes through baptism and faith.<sup>100</sup>

Since Christian baptism is not really instituted until after the Lord's resurrection, the big question remains whether faith is demanded to receive the benefits of this baptism. Or are we permitted to baptize where there is not even the slightest certainty of the existence of faith? This question must ultimately be answered by the command of our Lord to baptize the nations in Matthew 28. But before proceeding to this classical text itself, perhaps we should look first at Mark 16:16, which is probably the best commentary on Matthew 28:19f.

As perhaps many of you know, it is the opinion of many scholars that Mark's Gospel ends with verse eight and not verse twenty. A brief look at the new translation of the American Bible Society called the Good News will show the divergent endings. Where the various endings came from, we don't know. They were probably added very early because the Gospel ends rather abruptly, "neither said they anything to any man; for they were afraid." Those who know Mark and his style of writing will not be offended by this abrupt ending, because his Gospel also has an abrupt beginning. But either Mark himself or someone else who thought something else should be said, attached the following: an appearance of our Lord, the command to baptize, the ascension into heaven and the session at

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<sup>98</sup>John 3:22ff.

<sup>99</sup>John 3:8-12

<sup>100</sup>The relationship between the baptism of John the Baptist and Christian baptism, as it was practiced after Christ's ascension has been a concern to some. Christian Baptism included everything that John's did; but John's baptism did not include everything that was going to be included in the one finally instituted by Christ. The following differences may be cited. (1) John's baptism was not associated with the full revelation of God as Father, Son and Spirit. Christian baptism is. Cf. Acts 18:24 - 19:6. Apollos, who had received John's baptism, was zealous in the power of the Spirit in proclaiming Jesus as the Old Testament Messiah, but he had never heard of the Spirit. (2). John's baptism was not based on the resurrection of Christ. Christian baptism is one of the functions to bring the individual believer into living contact with the resurrected Christ. On this account the disciples of our Lord and others who had seen our Lord during the forty days after the resurrection were not given a new Baptism. This experience was their baptism. Apollos, on the other hand, was apparently ignorant of the events that had transpired and had not seen the resurrected Lord. The baptism of John was for the remission of sins. and had not seen the resurrected Lord. The baptism of John was for the remission of sins. The baptism of Christ not only included the remission of sins but was administered in the name of Jesus. Then he became aware of the Holy Spirit. Cf. Acts 19:3-6.

the right hand of the Father. Regardless of its origin, Mark 16:16 may be considered an interpretation of Matthew 28. The passage in Mark that concerns us reads as follows: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." The coordination between faith and baptism is obvious. There can be no baptism without faith.

The long ending of Mark puts baptism squarely into the center of the kingdom of activity of preaching the Gospel, since the preceding verse is the command to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every living creature." Some have wondered why here the lack of baptism does not damn, though the lack of faith does, because Mark 16:16 concludes with the phrase: "but he that believeth not, shall be damned." It does not say "he that believeth not and is not baptized shall be damned." The obvious meaning is that if a person did not have faith, he would not be baptized. In fact, without faith, he would not even be eligible for baptism. Thus, mentioning a rite as a condition through which the unbeliever was not permitted to undergo would be useless.

Here is a comparison. Whoever lives in the United States for five consecutive years and takes an oath of allegiance to our country will become a citizen. Whoever refuses to live in our country for five years is not eligible for citizenship. In stating the negative, we need not mention taking the oath of allegiance to the nation; because if a person did not live here for five years, he would have no chance to do so. What the Mark passages clearly teach is that baptism without faith is an impossibility. Of course, as the church grew to maturity, there were people who were baptized but did not believe or later fell away. But Mark is not speaking to the soul keeping activity of the church. It is quite obvious from the words of Mark, that an unbeliever, whether or not he is baptized, will be damned. Mark here is speaking about the mission activity of the church and in this process, faith and baptism are correlatives.

Mark is an interpretation and a commentary on the words of our Lord recorded in Matthew, "Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." In Mark's Gospel, the connection between faith and baptism is obvious and explicit. In Matthew's Gospel, the connection is beneath the surface. The RSV in saying, "Go ye therefore and make disciples out of all nations." is more precise than the KJV with "teach". The command in its bare form is "disciplize the nations".

Unfortunately, the meaning of the word "disciple" is not the best. In American Protestantism, it has become a very moralistic term. Such terms as Jesus as the 'master' and the church as "disciples" have since the advent of liberalism. become filled with moralistic concepts. This language is now on the wane, especially with the coming of situation ethics where Jesus is no longer a moral teacher, but still it leaves a bad taste in the mouth of a Lutheran who was taught to believe that a man is justified by grace through faith and without the deeds of the law. Even to say that a disciple is a student, or a follower is too academic a term and thus not strong enough. The term disciple is most frequently used for the twelve disciples of Jesus. Certainly, baptism does not make us disciples in this sense of the word, and certainly this is not the mission of the church,

According to the New Testament, a disciple is a person who is a member of the kingdom of God, a person who confesses Jesus and believes that He is the Son of God. The word to make disciples suggests of itself the concept of faith. Make disciples means “make people believers or put them into the status of faith.”

Though the English text or translation of Matthew 13:52 does not suggest that a disciple is a person who belongs to the kingdom, the Greek text definitely teaches this. The KJV says, “Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder.” The word “instructed” is not the best. What this says is that “every individual who attaches himself to the kingdom of heaven — disciple is like a householder.” The mere fact that this appears in Matthew 13 is significant because this is the chapter with the parables of the kingdom, e.g. wheat and tares, the mustard seed, the leaven, the treasure hid in the field, the pearl of great price, and the net with a variety of fish.

The person or persons who are associated with the good wheat, with the pearl, is the scribe who attaches himself to the kingdom as a disciple, has membership in the kingdom. This is impossible without faith. Because faith is the qualifying mark of the person who belongs to the kingdom, Jesus says of Canaanite woman “Great is thy faith.”<sup>101</sup> and to the Roman centurion, “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.”<sup>102</sup> Taking the whole concept of the kingdom of God or heaven together, the disciple is that person who has accepted Jesus as the Savior, The Gospel command is included in the word “make disciples” and making disciples is bringing a person to faith. Accompanying activities of making disciples are the Baptizing and the teaching. Acts 14:21 shows that accepting the Gospel through faith puts a person in the category of a disciple, regarding the activity of Paul and Barnabas the NEB says, “After bringing the good news, to that town, where they gained many converts.” The word here to make converts is the same word *to make disciples* in Matthew 28, it is translated in Acts 14:21 according to the KJV as *taught many*, But the NEB comes the closest to the meaning with “make converts.” To show how faith is such an intimate part of the command of our Lord to Baptize, it might better be translated “Go and make converts out of all the nations, then Baptize them in the name of the Triune God and teach them all things,” After a person has been converted, he should not remain without Baptism which brings him into intimate relationship with the Triune God and by teaching he will learn what this relationship has done for him.

It has been quite customary to say that making disciples is carried out through baptism and teaching. This would fit very nicely into our concept of infant baptism, But Jesus here gives a command to baptize all nations, which must also include adults. Based on this exegesis some have suggested that we first baptize the heathen adults then teach them about Christ. Without wanting to make a caricature out of anyone’s position, I think we could call such a method

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<sup>101</sup> Matthew 15:13.

<sup>102</sup> Matthew 8:5–11.

Romanism, with obvious *ex opere operato* view of the sacrament of baptism.<sup>103</sup> Such *Zwangstaufe* is magical, is completely without Scriptural support and will never bring the new life in Christ, which is now in baptism. Unless we are absolutely sure, as far as human beings can be sure, about the faith of the person being baptized, we should not baptize. There will be nothing invalid about a baptism without faith, but without faith baptism cannot deliver to the individual those great things, including the new life, which God promises in His Holy Scriptures, Thus the command according to both Mark and Matthew, Mark being a commentary on Matthew includes:

- (1) preach the Gospel
- (2) convert the nations
- (3) Baptize them, bringing them into an intimate relationship with the Triune God
- (4) instruct them about this new life which God has given them in baptism.

All preaching

and instruction in the church to the faithful people of God are in reality an elaboration of

what is given and promised to them in baptism.

It is quite obvious from the Book of Acts that new life in baptism is not possible for the individual without faith. Take, for example, the events of the first Pentecost according to the second chapter of the Book of Acts, Consider the procedure. First, Peter preached the Gospel. Then he concludes his sermon with the words: “Repent and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins.” Luke the writer then comments, “Then they that gladly received the Word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.”<sup>104</sup> The procedure is virtually identical with that used by John the Baptist and we may also conclude with the method used by Jesus’ disciples before the Resurrection: (1) preaching; (2) faith; (3) baptism; (4) inclusion in the church or in the case of John the Baptist, the kingdom of heaven.

I do not think that it is necessary to treat with any great detail how the method suggested in Matthew 28:19f, and then used by St. Peter on Pentecost, is followed in every instance in the book of Acts where Baptizing is mentioned. There are the cases of the Ethiopian eunuch, Lydia, the seller of purple, the jailer at Philippi and others.

There are four significant sections on baptismal theology in the New Testament Epistles, Romans 6, Galatians 3:24-27; Colossians 2:10f. and Hebrews 10:22-24. In all of these cases, there is a direct reference to faith and baptism. Thus, whenever the blessings of baptism are discussed, they are discussed alongside of faith. This is not to give the impression that the blessings present in baptism are in any way dependent on faith, but the reception of these blessings depends on faith.

The *locus classicus* for the blessings of baptism is Romans 6:3ff. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his

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<sup>103</sup> Scaer, *Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, 89.

<sup>104</sup> Acts 2:38f.

death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. “

Romans 6 does mention here such concepts as faith and grace, but Romans 6 does follow directly after Romans 5 with its stirring confession on faith in the life of the believer. “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”<sup>105</sup> Does Romans Five teach justification by grace and faith and Romans six teach justification by baptism? What St. Paul is doing here must be examined with a little more care before asserting that this is contradiction. Romans 5 speaks of the centrality of grace over all of a person’s life. It speaks of God’s grace that covers the entire sinful human situation, Romans 5:20 states, “But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound,” Paul here realizes that his reader might get the impression that he should sin more to get more grace. Then he switches from the topic of justification to sanctification. Sin, deliberate sin, is not an option or choice for the Christian, since Baptism has offered him a new life in Christ, baptism is a storehouse of power in order that he may continue to overcome the sin that is still adhering to his evil nature. Faith is the approach of man to God. Baptism is the approach of God to man. It is baptism that makes the new life possible. It is not because of faith alone that man can live the new life, but baptism supplies the individual with the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ so that his faith may be inactive in regard to sin, but alive to God through good works.

The coordination between baptism and faith as correlatives in bringing the new life is even more obvious in Galatians 3:24-27.

“So the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under the custodian; for in Christ Jesus, you are all sons of God through faith, For as many of you as were Baptized in Christ have put Christ on.”

Here justification is made a result of faith. Faith brings with it sonship to God. Thus even for Paul faith is the prerequisite for our entering the kingdom. On God’s part there is a corresponding action in baptism, where He makes Christ a part of our existence. In baptism, God reaches down to us and gives us Christ. By faith we reach up and lay hold of Christ. As close as my clothing is to me so Christ is close to me in faith. This interaction of faith and baptism gives the Christian the new life in Christ. In this passage here St. Paul perhaps is referring to a Baptismal practice of the early church. In baptism the recipient was completely submerged in the water and then upon coming out was dressed in a white linen robe. This white linen robe was symbolical of the fact that he had put off the old garment of the flesh or sinful self or old Adam and now has put Christ

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<sup>105</sup> Romans 5:1.



on.<sup>106</sup> In the terms of John's Gospel the baptized has been born again and has begun a new life in Jesus Christ. Here is the action of water and the Spirit.<sup>107</sup> In Paul this is accomplished through baptism and faith. In Colossians 2:11f. we find this same joint action of God working through baptism and the Christian responding in faith.

“In Him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with Him in Baptism, in which you were also raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. And you who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses~ having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; that he has set aside, nailing it to the cross.”

The Colossians had a tendency to go back to ceremonial laws as a part of the process of salvation. St. Paul tells them that this is now an impossibility because of three things; the cross, baptism and faith. Justification for the entire world was obtained when God nailed our sins to Christ's cross and death. baptism buries us with Christ so that, what that cross earned, we can now have. Faith is that act through which we associate ourselves with this death and receive its benefits. The concluding result is that by baptism we renounce our sinful existence with the same finality, that the flesh or the foreskin is removed in circumcision. This cross, baptism, faith and the new life in Christ are seen by St. Paul to be part of the same process.

The final passage to be considered in showing the connection between faith and baptism is Hebrews 10: 22, “Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water,” Here we see the faith based on the blood of Christ corresponding to the outward application of water to the body in Baptism.

From the opening of the ministry of John the Baptist to the close of the New Testament revelation, Baptism and faith are seen as correlatives which have their assigned places in God's plan of salvation. There might be an occasional exception. To this rule as, for example, the thief on the cross. Some have suggested that he might have received the Baptism of John the Baptist, but this has only been suggested, rather arbitrarily, to fit the usual pattern. According to the practice and teaching of John the Baptist, Jesus Himself, and His apostles through oral and written word, baptism and faith were seen as necessary prerequisites for entering the kingdom, for joining oneself to Jesus Christ, and for

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<sup>106</sup> The reintroduction of the practice is made in *the proposed rights for Holy Baptism and the ordination of a Minister* prepared by the Commission on Worship, Liturgics and Hymnology of the Synodical Conference, (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House. 1967), 6. The custom of white robes was perpetuated by the white christening gown that was and still is very popular in Lutheran churches for infants. Though now, modern design “baptismal suits” marketed in stores are hardly part of the tradition, they are nevertheless white in color.

<sup>107</sup>John 3:3ff.

participation in the church. The thought of anyone being baptized without faith is unthinkable.

Of course, they must have had the same experience which we occasionally have. They must have baptized people whose confession was limited only to their lips. Apostasy was just as prevalent among the apostles in their times as it is among us who are entrusted with the apostolic word. If baptism without faith was an unheard-of thing, so faith without baptism was also an impossibility. Now, of course, this does not mean that at the exact moment of faith a person is compelled to be baptized. Because we are temporal creatures living within temporal dimensions, the act of believing and the act of baptizing, as required by Mark, cannot happen at the same moment. However, it is the obvious intent of Scripture that after a person has professed faith in Christ, he should be baptized. It is God's purpose that wherever there is faith, baptism should be applied, and wherever there is baptism, faith should be the response of the individual. The Jews were baptized as soon as they had heard Peter's sermon. The Ethiopian eunuch heard Philip's exegesis of Isaiah 53 and was baptized. Similar were the experiences of Lydia and the jail keeper. Peter preached to Cornelius and his family, and they were subsequently baptized. According to apostolic teaching and practice, faith and baptism are correlative and have their functions in being bases for the new life. As St. Paul says, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope that belongs to your call, *one Lord, one faith, one Baptism.*"<sup>108</sup>

### **Excursus on Infant Faith**

Special attention must be given to the question of how children can be related to the new life which is offered in baptism. As it has been shown, there is a necessary connection between baptism and faith. The plan of salvation, established by God, would include both baptism, as the hand through which God reaches down to men, and faith, as the hand by which man reaches up to baptism and takes what this baptism offers, since baptism is rooted in the cross, grave and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is enabled to offer the forgiveness of sins. baptism as it is practiced among us is infant baptism for the most part. Not that we do not practice adult baptism. In fact, we rejoice if God gives the opportunity to baptize an adult. Nevertheless, the baptismal record of most any congregation will show the overwhelming preponderance of infant baptisms. Various examples might be taken from the New Testament to show the relationship of the new life in baptism to faith, but these baptisms deal explicitly with adults. Such explicit references to children being baptized are lacking. This, however, should not disturb us. The situation in the early church was similar, for example, to our missionary work in New Guinea, where the overwhelming number of baptisms are adult baptisms. Wherever Christianity grew and prospered, there was a gradual change from adult to infant baptism, which can be explained by a purely natural sequence of events. As the western society became "Christianized", there simply were less and less people who had not been baptized as infants. Perhaps in Europe, the only unbaptized individuals were the Jews; but the Gentile population was, as a rule, always baptized. That adult baptism was more the rule in the early church can be

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<sup>108</sup> Ephesians 4:4f.

shown from the rather large “Baptist-type” baptistries that have been unearthed. With the passing of time, the baptistries approached the type used now in our churches. Still, at the time of the Reformation, a baptismal font was large enough to submerge a good ten-pound baby. Now most of them are just large enough to accommodate the hand of the pastor. But this switch from adult to infant baptism is a natural change connected with society, a change which really did not have any theological significance. This gradual change from adult to infant baptism can be observed in many mission fields.

Since Baptism in the New Testament had primarily (but not only) adults in view, do we then have to readjust our baptismal theology with the promise of the new life to accommodate children and infant baptism? The issue of Infant baptism is really the important one from a pragmatic and utilitarian point of view, simply because in most congregations, the overwhelming majority are those of infants and children.

In the New Testament, baptism always demands faith, and faith always demands baptism. There is no limbo in between where baptism is without faith — certainly not a limbo that receives God’s approval. Here, of course, is an issue where the overwhelming majority of the Christian denominations have felt a little uncomfortable. The Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, Dr. Martin Luther, and the Lutheran dogmatics are unanimous in that infant baptism is a baptism with faith ~ the present faith of the infant being baptized.<sup>109</sup>

The Roman Catholics, the Reformed, and of course the Baptists deny the reality of infant faith and thus they are caught on the horns of a dilemma because Scriptural baptism is always coordinated with faith. Tho Baptists have a somewhat more honest opinion, because they deny infant faith and didn’t practice infant baptism. They deny the new life in baptism to the infant and they deny baptism to infants. This is somewhat more logical.

But for the Roman Catholics and the Reformed, this presents more of a problem. The Roman Catholics are surprisingly aware of Scriptural principles when they admit that baptism must be administered in faith; however, since the child is without faith, they baptize the child on the basis of the church or the sponsors’ faith. The Reformed have a position which is not totally unlike this. They baptize on the basis of the parents’ faith. For this reason, the parents bring the children to be baptized. There are certain variations to this theme where either the faith of the congregation or the sponsors or the entire church may be substituted for the lack of faith in the child.

Another opinion that has found some popularity among some Lutherans and also Episcopalians for about the last century or so is baptizing the child based on future faith. Of course, with the right type of mental maneuvering we can use this “faith substitution,” but it must be readily admitted that certainly nowhere do the Scriptures permit one person to enter the kingdom through the faith of another.

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<sup>109</sup> Karl Brinkel, *Die Lehre Luthers von der fides infantium bei der Kindertaufen*. (Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1958; Edmund Schlink, *Theology of the Lutheran Confessions*. translated Paul F Koehneke and Herbert J.A. Bouman. (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961), 151f., Franz Pieper. *Christian Dogmatics*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1951), 2:448.

Some people have been healed through the faith of others, as for example the centurion and his servant; but no one has received forgiveness through the faith of another. Nowhere do we find baptism being administered with the condition that the person will believe later in life or the basis that he might by chance do so. If we first baptized and hoped that later children would believe, then we might baptize the entire world hoping they would come to faith. While some might want to confide such a practice of baptizing based on future faith, they would have to be asked on what basis would they make this limitation. As we have shown before, the word 'to make disciples', in and of itself implies joining the kingdom of God through faith. The baptizing and teaching do not necessarily suggest the required order of first baptizing then teaching.

To make the entire matter even more confusing some Lutherans have pointed out the fact that Luther said that even if children do not believe, their baptism was a valid baptism. This Luther only offered as a hypothesis to prove an argument that the validity of baptism does not rest on faith. Luther was also speaking of the validity of baptism, he was not speaking about baptism giving new life. A hypothetical statement for Luther would be this: "If unbelieving children were baptized, they would still have a valid baptism and would not need to be re-baptized in spite of their lack of faith; however, such children would not have the new life in baptism, because new life can only be appropriated in faith."<sup>110</sup> These scholars have shown, however, that Luther held to the doctrine of infant faith throughout his ministry. One practice which was common among the Lutheran theologians both of last and present centuries was to ascribe all the blessings of baptism, including the indwelling of Christ, without saying that the child had faith.<sup>111</sup> This is of course preposterous and hideous. Christ as the Creator lives in all creatures according to His power, but He certainly never dwells with His grace within the heart of the individual without faith. The basic foundation of the Christian life as St. Paul and our Lutheran fathers recognized was faith. "The just shall live by faith." There is no other way.

The church has always been a little touchy about children and their relation to the kingdom, and while sometimes permitting the children on the outer rim of ecclesiastical fellowship; it has tended to deny children full fellowship. The mere fact that the disciples attempted to prevent the mothers from bringing their children into physical contact with Jesus only indicated that they thought that the message of the kingdom, which Jesus proclaimed, was not really for children. The disciples were only acting like men always do act.

The great message of John the Baptist and the Sermon on the Mount and the Parables of the Kingdom could not, they thought, apply to children, The incidents of Jesus putting the child in the midst followed by the warning of putting the millstone around the neck of the offender, the mentioning of their angels who do always behold the Father's face and the promise that to them belong the kingdom of God, should have cleared up the difficulty once and for all, that to them, the

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<sup>110</sup> Brinkel, op. cit., 9-19. The late professor, Dr. Karl Brinkel of the University of Rostock has cleared up many of these issues with his very careful research. For any Lutheran theologian, this volume must be read.

<sup>111</sup> Scaer, op. cit., pp. 258-267.

children, belongs all the blessings of the kingdom. The major question, of course, is still, "can children believe," the doctrine of infant faith is not widely accepted today.

Roman Catholic scholastic theology has denied infant faith. The child was born in a somewhat neutral state with only evil inclinations. Baptism was a type of antidote or preventive medicine. If the child was not baptized and died, there was the *limbo infantium*, a kind of neutral state for children, which was not all that bad. The Reformed merely ascribed the blessings of the parents to the children, and since all were elected either to heaven or hell, it did not matter whether a given child was baptized, His doom was sealed. With the advent of modern psychology, the idea of infant faith is perhaps even more repulsive. Being influenced by the Rationalism of the 18th century, psychology looks upon the child as a kind of neutral entity, which can only be acted upon through a developed consciousness. modern theology is so permeated with existentialism with its "I-Thou" relationship that infant Baptism, where the child is obviously passive in the act, has fallen into even greater contempt. Because of this a man like Karl Barth, who will probably be remembered as one of the great existential theologians, has written prolifically against infant Baptism, because it is a baptism without faith.

I have mentioned all these antitheses and objections so that we may clearly see what issues are at stake. The question is this: Is the child baptized in infancy capable of new life? Since infant baptism is the common practice among us, this is an important question. Can children or infants really believe? From the Scriptures, we will show both implicitly and explicitly that children, even the very youngest, are capable of faith. If they are capable of faith, then they are capable of the new life in Baptism,<sup>112</sup> In the pericope of the blessing of the children<sup>113</sup> Jesus specifically says that children are capable of receiving the kingdom of heaven. "Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not. For of such is the kingdom of God." Now exegetically the main thrust of the passage is that kingdom will belong to those who become ethically like children.

Jesus is attempting to make sure that the disciples themselves have a place in the kingdom. This he does by comparing them to children. Because of this comparison, the place of children in the kingdom is more firmly established than that of the disciples, The thing, by which we compare things, has without doubt more of the quality, which is the point of the comparison, thus if we say that a piece of bread is as hard as a stone, the stone has more of the quality of hardness than the bread. Thus, the children have a qualitatively greater faith than do the disciples. To make sure that Jesus meant to include the children in the kingdom, He took them up in His hands and blessed them, We can be assured that Jesus was not merely playing around, but that He was giving them a real blessing — a blessing that could work only to their salvation. Since they belong in the

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<sup>112</sup> Cf. also David P. Scaer, "Infant Baptism: is a Middle Road Possible," *Christianity Today*, 11:12 (April 14, 1967) This article gives a contemporary overview of the question of infant faith in theology today.

<sup>113</sup> Matthew 19:13ff.; Mark 10:13ff. and Luke 18:15ff.

kingdom, they therefore must be capable of faith. The person without faith has no place in the kingdom; but like the guest without the wedding garment is thrown out into outer darkness.

In the Gospels of Mark and Luke are included the words “whoever does not receive the kingdom as a little child, shall not enter therein,” which only re-establishes their ability to have faith. There is no other way to receive the kingdom than by faith. Thus, if the little children receive the kingdom and they are prime examples of how this is done, it must be by faith. If it is then remarked, that perhaps three- and four-year-old children are capable of faith, but not infants, we remember that according to Luke these children brought to Jesus, were infants. Thus it is not wrong to picture the Savior holding perhaps two or three infants in His arms when He spoke these words.

Anyone who saw the Savior hold the infants and speak these words could not have any doubt that these children could and did believe, the pericope of Matthew 18:2ff. <sup>114</sup> states explicitly that children have faith, thus infant faith is not only shown to be Biblical by deduction, which is, by the way, a perfectly acceptable method, but also by Jesus’ words. This pericope shows the disciples arguing about status and prestige in the kingdom. Jesus Who is very good at object lessons took a child and put him in the middle of these grown quarreling heroes of faith and said to them they had better become like this child — In fact, the child and whoever is like the child is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. The quality which makes a person great in the kingdom is the quality of faith. Compare the stories of Roman centurion and the Syrophenician woman. It is not the humanistic quality of conscious self-effacement. Too often public humility is ordinary Pharisaism and work righteousness, against which Jesus frequently preached. The quality of the child was that it did not even think about its faith, but in complete trust leaned upon the grace of God, the disciples were extremely conscious of their faith and thought about the greatness of their faith. This self-concern about the greatness of their faith caused the argument.

People who do not accept infant faith say that the children do not know what they are doing, because perhaps they are not in a state of consciousness, but this quality of being self-directed and self-concerned which counts very highly in the world is considered anything but a virtue by Jesus. <sup>115</sup> The child is great in faith, because he is concerned not about his faith but only about grace. Even though I believe that this is enough to prove the possibility of the new life in the child through faith, Jesus goes on to make the point more emphatically:

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Mark 9:36ff. and Luke 9:47f.

<sup>115</sup> Consciousness about self is not a prerequisite for faith. This rationalistic perversion may be traced to the philosophy of Descartes, who said “I think, therefore I exist.” (*Cogito ergo sum*) This is the beginning of modern existentialism where existence precedes essence. Something is, because I am aware of it. This philosophy was carried into Protestant theology through Friedrich Schleiermacher, who made the human self-consciousness the source of all religious truth. Such thinking is humanistic at best and definitely not Biblical. Cf. Brinkel, *op. Cit.*, 104, and Scaer, *The Doctrine of Infant Baptism*, *op. cit.*, 53-73.

“Whoever receives this (τοῦτο<sup>116</sup>) child in my name receives me; but whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to fall away, it would be better for him if a millstone were tied around his neck and he were dropped in the midst of the sea.”

Receiving a person who approaches us in the name of Christ is receiving a person who, by faith, has Christ in the heart. Here Christ gives the same great honor which He alone deserves to the children. After considering this, it is impossible to deny children the new life which only faith and baptism can give. Then Jesus gives the warning about offending one of these little ones who believe in Him. This passage explicitly says children have faith.<sup>117</sup> The word “little” does not refer to stature but to age. As we have shown in the previous part of the paper, the terms refer to the very youngest in the city of Nineveh, who did penance; it refers to those children whom Paul included in his apostolic ministry; and it refers to those who join in the praises around the throne of the Lamb in the Book of Revelation. Jesus seems to be extremely agitated about anyone who should even question the place of children in the kingdom. The penalty for such a person who causes the child to lose faith is being dropped in the middle of the sea with a millstone around his neck. The reference is probably here to the Mediterranean. But in our language, it would be comparable to being hung in a gas chamber and being finished off by a firing squad. After this, Jesus offers the option that instead of offending a believing child it would be better to cut off the hand and foot and pluck out the eye, though drastic action, still it is better than sitting in hell with all your members for offending the believing child. Not thinking that the disciples are convinced, Jesus reminds them that the faith of children is so great in its saving qualities it prevents them from the presumptuous sins of which the disciples themselves are guilty. For this reason, the children’s angels have the privilege of always beholding the Father’s face. To make doubly sure that the disciples do not miss the point, Jesus tells the parable of the Lost Sheep. Jesus the Good Shepherd went out of his way to die for the child, because it is the Father’s desire that not even one of these little ones should be lost,

Thus the disciples are warned against excluding children in their missionary activity, because Jesus has included them in His atonement. When the disciples heard the final command to make disciples out of nations, they must have remembered what Jesus had shortly said before about children. They were capable of faith and hence of being great in the kingdom. How could they ever be refused?

Baptism, which is a mark of faith, which supplies the power to faith, and which ushers an individual into the kingdom of God, and even into the same arms of Jesus which once enfolded those babies which were brought to Him. The next question is — if children have faith and are they capable of the new life in

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<sup>116</sup> According to Luke 9:48 Jesus was speaking about the specific child present there,

<sup>117</sup>“τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ” (Mt 18:6). The Greek word for "little ones" (μικρῶν) refers to the class of children under four years old and according to both Hebrew and New Testament usage has special reference to the "littlest", namely the infants. For a fuller discussion of this question cf. Chapter IV above and especially note 27 in that same chapter. μικρῶν includes the βρέφος, the infants, and is synonymous with them.

baptism, which certainly means increase/ sanctification? “Simply because the recently baptized infant does not write out checks for the church’s treasury does not mean that it does not and cannot do works which please God. If we think like this, it means that we do not understand good works. Perhaps the greatest of the good works is the praise of sincere and humble faith to God. Chapters 18 and 19 in Matthew deal with children. Matthew 21 is the account of the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem with the choruses of Hosanna.

Generally, we get the idea that this was an adult affair. But the chief priests and scribes knew children were also singing “Hosanna to the Son of David”<sup>118</sup> When asked about this display, Jesus quoted Psalm 8:3, “Have you never read, ‘Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast brought praise. Jesus is obviously referring to those who are so small that they cannot digest solids, but must drink milk. It is these small children who sing the praises of God. The sincere praise of God is a result of faith and indicates that the new life has begun. If this were purely mechanical praise, which did not come from faith and which did not indicate the new life, then a phonograph record with a few hymns would be equally as acceptable in God’s sight. Revelation teaches that children will be judged according to their work, so this indicates their capability for sanctification.”<sup>119</sup>

The inclusion of children in the promises of God through faith is indicated in other places of the Scripture. The psalmist indicates that he has been a believer since the time of his birth. “For thou, O Lord, art my hope, my trust, O Lord from my youth. Upon thee have I leaned since my birth; thou art he who took me from my mother’s womb. My praise is continually of Thee.”<sup>120</sup>

The prime example of a person believing from his mother’s womb is John the Baptist who even before he was born saluted the unborn Christ: “For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the babe in my womb jumped for joy.”<sup>121</sup> If a child can believe before it is born, how much can a child believe after it is born — when the usual means of grace are available to it.

Of course, the question comes up: how then do children believe? Children believe through the same essential means that God uses for everyone who belongs to the kingdom, namely the word. In the case of children, we think of the water and the word, but of course, this applies to everyone. Paul writes, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word.”<sup>122</sup> ‘Washing with the word’ is a technical term for Baptism.<sup>123</sup> Children certainly do belong to the church or as Jesus calls it, its the kingdom of God and children are certainly those

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<sup>118</sup> Matthew 21:15.

<sup>119</sup> Revelation 20:12f.

<sup>120</sup> Psalm 71:1f.

<sup>121</sup> Luke 1:14, 47. This is an argument from the greater to the lesser. If God can create faith in an unborn infant, how much easier is it for him to do in a born infant. The passage of itself does not prove that all infants have faith, but it does teach that that it is a possibility. If it is said that infant faith is an impossibility this passage may be used as legitimate rejoinder. Luke 1 teaches the possibility of infant faith. Matthew 18 teaches the fact.

<sup>122</sup> Ephesians 5:25f.

<sup>123</sup> Ysebaert, op. cit., p. 63.



for whom Christ died. This is taught perhaps most explicitly in Matthew 18 where Jesus says that he has come to seek and to save the lost child. This kingdom in which children are entitled to membership or discipleship is cleansed through the washing of the word or Baptism.

Our church practice both in Baptism and Christian education has its roots in our theology of Baptism and we are aware of the children's capability for the kingdom. We work sincerely and hard in our parochial schools, Sunday schools, Vacation Bible Schools and Confirmation Classes to nourish the new life given them in Baptism, however, we can do our tasks better when we fully realize that this work has sufficient, clear and explicit bases in the Scriptures. Our work on Christian education, whether it be a nursery school or high school, is only a continuation of baptism. We are nourishing the new life that was once given in baptism. Baptism is like the death and resurrection of Christ. It is a once and for all event, eternally valid.

## VI Baptism Through Faith is the Basis for the New Life of Sanctification

Whenever an individual who in faith receives baptism, a radical change comes over the life of that person. Abraham, who received circumcision, the prototype of baptism, left his former home and, in the land of Canaan, began a life where he did those things that pleased God. The baptism of John the Baptist demanded a change in how individuals conducted themselves. The command to baptize is always coupled with the command to repent, which means literally “change your minds.” The mind of man, as originally created by God, was directed to God alone. This was the image of God that man was given that man would be like God and work for God’s purposes. The essence of sin is rebellion. The temptation that came to Eve from the serpent suggested to her that since she and her husband were so much like God already, having been created in the image of God, that they ought now to become fully like gods. Because man now seeks his own glory, this image is ruined.

Wherever the Gospel is preached, and people submit themselves to baptism, there the image of God is being gradually restored. Baptism can only be administered together with the proclamation of repentance and the promise to devote one’s entire existence to God. We know in the case of John’s Baptism this meant an entirely different attitude to one’s possessions and vocation. Those who had two coats had to give one away. The person with the abundance of food had to share it with the person who had none.

Baptism also has vocational imperatives. People dealing with money can no longer be guilty of extortion or charging too much. Those who are engaged in military and policing activities cannot use their uniform to shake others down.<sup>124</sup> Herod to whom John also preached, had to stop his philandering with his brother’s wife, A brief glance at Luke chapter three will show the strong connection between baptism, the life of the Christian, the Ten Commandments and the will of God. Baptism is the attachment of the individual to God whereby he also promises not to do what his sinful desires ask of him, but to do what the will of God demands of him, The will of God for each individual is that he should live according to God’s desires.

The desired conduct for the Christian, both inwardly and outwardly, is what God has expressed in the Ten Commandments. John, in preaching and administering baptism, alludes to the commandments concerning murder, adultery, and stealing. These must stop before the new life in baptism can begin. Of course, after this life in baptism has begun, the Christian will not only refrain from sinning, but he will do positive good works like sharing his earthly goods, as John suggests.

In the first baptism administered by the apostles on Pentecost, we also see this accompanying desire in those who receive the message of the Gospel to do something concerning their existence. When the crowd realizes it was responsible for the death of God’s Christ, they plead with Peter, “Brethren, what shall we do?” The answer of Peter is very similar to that of John’s, “Repent and be baptized.” The demands of Christian baptism would be as severe as those of John

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<sup>124</sup> Matthew 3.

the Baptist's. Peter punctuated his sermon on that day with the words, "Save yourselves from this crooked or perverse generation."<sup>125</sup> A person who is not committed to Jesus Christ is in the eyes of God always a perverse person. Baptism is the means whereby he bids farewell to this existence and turns to God and joins the people of God, the church.

Perhaps in no other place in Scripture are the effects of Baptism in the life of the Christian better described than in Romans 6 where Paul describes baptism as dying and being buried with Christ that is followed by the resurrection of a new life, St. Paul here is using an analogy. He looks at the crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ as real historical events that actually happened,<sup>126</sup> Because the Christians in the congregation at Rome have been baptized, they now stand in a unique relationship to these events. To be sure they have not been crucified in the sense Christ was crucified and certainly have not experienced the resurrection from the dead like He experienced it.

Nevertheless, because of baptism, something analogous has happened in their lives. Paul sees the Christian consisting of two natures. Now we are not speaking of the constitutional nature of man whereby man is body and soul; but we are speaking of the two ethical natures of man whereby he lives his life to God and whereby his sinful nature causes him to live for his own purposes which are not directed to God. St. Paul says that because you have been baptized, your old nature has been crucified with Christ. It is dead; It is destroyed. And now, because of Christ's resurrection, your new man may now reign supreme in your life.

Just as death cannot touch or harm the resurrected Christ, so because of your baptism, your former sinful existence cannot touch your new life. Because of the resurrection, Jesus Christ lives eternally with God in the thought of St. Paul, of you: Baptism, you are now living a life with God. In the thought of St Paul, there is a very real and vital connection between the great redemptive works of Christ and the new life in Baptism. He speaks of crucifixion, death, burial; resurrection, ascension and the session at the right hand of the Father. Through these actions Christ proclaimed Himself the conqueror over sin. The work of Christ is the basis for the new life and through analogy, they are also examples of similar actions in the life of the Christian,

In Romans 6, baptism is part of the process whereby we are liberated or emancipated from slavery to sin and Satan and participate in the new life of the freedom of the sons of God. This section, which is so strong on baptismal theology and sanctification, closes with the words: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."<sup>127</sup> Because of this, Baptism must be considered as part of the gracious activity of God. Our life in baptism, whereby we are free from sin and serve God in good works, must be considered the result of the gracious activity of God.

In speaking of the new life, St. Paul uses some strong imperatives that might suggest that we are responsible for our new life. For example, he says in the same chapter, "Let not sin, therefore reign in your mortal bodies, to make you obey

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<sup>125</sup> Acts 2:40.

<sup>126</sup> For Bultmann these are "events" -- "Events" that happen only in preaching and not in history.

<sup>127</sup> Romans 6:23.

their passions. Do not yield your members to sin as instruments of wickedness but yield yourselves to God as men who have been brought from death to life.<sup>128</sup> But these imperatives for sanctification are only spoken to those whom God by grace in baptism has transferred from the realm of death into the realm of life.

In Hebrews 10:22-24, there is a direct connection between the blood of Christ, faith, baptism, and the life of good works. After the writer mentions the high priestly activity of Jesus Christ, whereby, through blood, Christ entered the sanctuary, he encourages the Christians to “Stir up one another to love and good works because their hearts have been sprinkled clean from a clear conscience and their bodies have been washed with pure water.” Now when the Scriptures mention good works, we must remove from our minds simple morality even though all good works are to be sure moral actions — regardless of what the philosophy of “situation ethics” has to say about the matter. But a good work is a work that God does through us. In the last analysis, it is an action of God which he accomplishes through us. Philippians 2:12 asserts that in all good actions, it is God who is at work within us. Thus, the moral imperative connected with baptism is not the moral imperative of the Commandments, which is always accompanied with the threat of punishment for those who don’t do them, but never accompanied with the power to do them. Nor is it the command of Kant’s ‘moral imperative’. The imperative of Baptism to lead a new life is both command and power. Christ is our High Priest and through Baptism we become subservient priests in his priesthood and the sacrifices which we offer up in our Christian lives, we do in His name and by His power. Baptism does not put us in a state of neutrality, whereby we have a choice between good and evil” But where once Satan held our feet and controlled our existence, now our feet through Baptism are firmly planted in the empty tomb of Christ. Because of baptism, we are priests under Christ, the great High Priest. In Romans, we are not slaves of sin, but slaves of righteousness, and since we are slaves, we can only do what our master wants. This thought alone should prevent our new life in Christ or what St. Paul calls our sanctification from turning into mere moralism.<sup>129</sup>

In other places, St. Paul attaches baptism to certain types of Christian behavior. In 1 Corinthians, Paul connects baptism with concern for all others, who, by baptism, also belong to the church of Jesus Christ.<sup>130</sup> This is the famous section where the church is described as the body of Christ. The church as Christ’s body anchors itself in the event of Christian baptism,

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit, we were all baptized into one body — Jews or Greeks, slaves or free — all were made to drink of one Spirit.”

Paul follows with the admonitions that Christians ought not to despise one another, since they belong together as the parts of a body belong together. Honor,

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<sup>128</sup> Romans 6:12.

<sup>129</sup> Romans 6:18f.

<sup>130</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13ff.

suffering and rejoicing to one part of the body mean honor, suffering and rejoicing for the entire body.

St. Paul, in speaking about the functioning of the body of Christ, is using an analogy in the same sense as Jesus as the shepherd, the door, and the vine are analogies. What the shepherd is to the sheep that is what Christ is to the church. And what the head is to the physical body, that is what Christ is to the church. Baptism puts me into the same relationship with Christ that the head of a physical body has with any of its parts. St. Paul wants us to understand the analogy in this way. The action of the human hand is never an isolated act, but always reflects the will of the head which controls it. His view of anatomy is correct. The hand has no independent action of itself. We know that when a certain part of the mind is damaged; the hand becomes paralyzed. When the mind or brain is relieved of the damage or pressure, the hand can then function. The hand acts but at the will of the mind. So it is with Christians who, now by baptism, stand in a unique relationship with Christ. We do the good works. But we are doing it because of the will, desire, and the power which Jesus Christ gives. As I do the works of God, I am also aware there are others who, because of their baptism, stand in the same relationship to Jesus Christ as I do. They are also performing functions. For Him. Sometimes they are given different tasks from the ones assigned to me. However, I am forbidden to despise them because God is working in and through them as He is working in and through me. St. Paul using the analogy of the body says that just as the body cannot operate through only one organ or member, so the church operates through different services, It is in this connection that St. Paul mentions the various functions of the church — apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of miracles, healers, helpers~ administrators. Thus, baptism means unity in our relationship to Christ, but diversity in the task which we do. Baptism suggests unity in diversity and diversity in unity. However, we hasten to say that St. Paul by no stretch either of the text or the imagination means that God suggests diversity in doctrine or belief. The relationship of the Baptized to Christ is always one and the same kind of relationship) a relationship through faith, The diversity is only how the members of the church relate to one another in works of love, not in how they relate to God, we say that baptism means that we have concern for those who are also Baptized and who share in the same type of relationship into which God through Baptism has placed each one of us.

In Titus 3:1-5, St. Paul lists specific good works that are connected with baptism. This section contains the verse that Luther incorporated into the Small Catechism to teach us how baptism works all these things. “According to his mercy, he saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost.” On the positive side, the baptized Christian will submit himself to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for honest work, to speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy to all men. On the negative side, St. Paul refers to the former condition of the Christians disobedience, being led astray, being slaves to our passions and pleasures, hatred, Since the appearance of God, our Savior in Jesus Christ, we can avoid these

things because He has given us a new birth through the washing of Baptism so that we being justified can have a new life.

Without being homiletical, one could almost say that St. Paul sounds so modern that he could be a twentieth-century writer. I will let you draw your own conclusions about marches, strikes and the shouting and the jeering of the students, but in my estimation St. Paul is very definite about the Christian's submission to government and authority and showing courtesy. If we still do not get the full import of what the apostle is saying. Consider that he is writing this letter from Rome where the authorities will soon put him on trial. Sometimes it has been questioned whether Titus 3:5 with its reference to the washing of regeneration, refers to baptism. This has been proved beyond the shadow of a doubt to refer to baptism. Similar terminology is used in John 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:11; Hebrew 10:22; Ephesians 5:25; and Acts 22:16. Baptism in the New Testament is not a technical term, but merely means to apply water. For example, in Mark 7:4 washing dishes and cups is referred to as "a Baptism". The same can be said of λούω or any of its derivatives. It can have a profane and sacred use. The use in Titus 3:5 is the sacred use and refers to Christian baptism.

There is one more passage that we would like to discuss in connection with this entire sphere of sanctification. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 teaches that baptism must put an end to the base sins of our existence in Satan's kingdom and these things become an impossibility for us because of our baptism. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom? Do not be deceived neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the greedy nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God." This passage is interesting because it connects baptism with the kingdom of God, justification, which suggests faith, and demands sanctification, which is the new life in Christ.

## VII Baptism Is The Basis of the New Life of the Congregation

One result of baptism is that the person who has met Christ in baptism is by the very act made a part of the church and desires to be part of this church. The church is, by definition, the saved people of God. The beginning of this can be seen in the Old Testament with Seth, the son of Adam. To them God had revealed himself for grace and those associated with him began to call upon the name of the Lord. They disassociate themselves ethically from those who don't call upon the Name. This action is perhaps the clearest in the case of Abraham. Receiving the circumcision means disassociating himself from his family and friends in Ur of the Chaldees and beginning a new people of God in the land of Canaan and beginning a nation and tradition who always call upon God's Name. Circumcision is the mark of the peculiar people of God who belong to Himself. The baptism of John the Baptist and Jesus begins a new group of people called the disciples. Now we are not referring to the "Twelve," but we are referring to those who might have numbered at least 500 even before the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.<sup>131</sup> These were those who are identified as the brethren to whom Christ appeared in resurrected form. This same principle is carried out in the apostolic church, through baptism, God added to the church those who would believe. Wherever baptism was administered, there, in that place, a church or a congregation sprung up. It is inconceivable that anyone was baptized and then not attached to the congregation. One of the marks or vestiges that Paul had administered baptism in any place was that after he left, there was a congregation. Thus, baptism can never be thought of as an isolated act. But baptism is an act upon which the church is established and grows; and baptism is the means by which the church adds to its membership. Baptism is both the foundation of the church and its mission tool. Perhaps no other words teach this theologically better than the words "for by one Spirit we were. all baptized into one body."<sup>132</sup> Thus baptism precedes the church and follows the church. This is also evident in the practice of John the Baptist. The new kingdom of God which centered in Jesus Christ came in the preaching and baptism of John. Because of this baptism, the people could rely on the good favor of God. Baptism not only established the church and extends it, but Baptism provides the unity for the church or congregation. The church is a unified group because they have been baptized by the same baptism, There are not many baptisms in the Christian church, but only one baptism and whenever anyone is baptized this one baptism is reaching out over an individual whom God wants to include in his kingdom. On this account, baptism should work for harmony within the Christian congregation to assure that all the members of the church work for the goals of the church. Paul used Baptism in this very way in dealing with the Christian congregation at Corinth, apparently their dissension was interrupting the work of the Gospel. Though everyone in the church had different tasks, because of their Baptism they must work for the same goals.<sup>133</sup> The same situation must have prevailed among the Ephesians whom he admonishes that, "they with all

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<sup>131</sup>The number five hundred is suggested by 1 Corinthians 15:6.

<sup>132</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13.

<sup>133</sup> 1 Corinthians 12, 13, 22.

lowliness and meekness, with patience forbear one another in love because they have one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all.”<sup>134</sup> In the same book he uses Baptism as an example of Christian love which should be imitated by these members of the congregation who are having marital problems, “Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, having cleansed her by the washing of the water with the word,”<sup>135</sup>

Baptism not only establishes the church, unifies the church, but baptism also provides the basis of the worshiping church. One of the few references to church attendance and the neglect of it is found in Hebrew 10:25, “not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some.” This is not an isolated ethical or moral command but is part of the full assurance of faith which the Christian has because of the atoning work of Christ which the Christian now possesses in baptism. The writer is saying we have assurance because our hearts are sprinkled with the blood of Christ and we are baptized. Because of this we must lay hold on the faith without wavering, stir up one another to good works and make sure that we worship publicly.<sup>136</sup> Being baptized means that the Baptized prays to God. This is suggested in the words of Annas toot. Paul, “Be Baptized, wash away your sins, calling upon the name of the Lord.”<sup>137</sup> Thus baptism gives the new life in the context of the Christian congregation. Because of one baptism, it is inconceivable that individual Christians should worship by themselves. And the church has never forgotten that because of baptism she is now permitted to worship the Triune God, It is no coincidence that the baptized congregation begins its worship in the name of the same God which by Baptism was first revealed to it, Thus the words of the pastor beginning the service are “In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost” suggest that those here are gathering here because of their baptism, The church calls upon the blessing of God, a blessing first given to the individuals through Baptism. To Baptize in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit means that we are Baptized for the sake and for the purposes of this God, And there is no higher purpose in the eyes of God than worshiping Him. For this purpose we were first created to serve God and His glory,<sup>138</sup>

We sin when we no longer served God Is purposes, but our own. A trace of this original pristine glory and of the glory which will be ours some day again can be seen when the congregation gathers to worship the God in whose name and for whose purposes we were baptized. The work of baptism is further extended when we preach in the name of this same God and declare the Gospel. It is also to the name of this God we pray, especially when we say “Our Father, hallowed be Thy Name.’ And it is because of the God who approached in Baptism that we are now allowed to pray to Him by calling on His Name. For this reason, the traditional prayers of the church have always included the Trinitarian ending, “through Jesus Christ, Thy Son our Lord, who with Thee and the Holy Ghost art one God forever,” Because of Baptism we may and can approach heaven with our prayers.

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<sup>134</sup> Ephesians 4:5.

<sup>135</sup> Ephesians 5:25f.

<sup>136</sup> Hebrews 10:22-25.

<sup>137</sup> Acts 22:16.

<sup>138</sup> To baptize in the name of the Triune God means to become His possession.



Through the Trinitarian ending, the suppliant is saying that the person speaking to you in prayer is your child through Baptism. Baptism reaches the epitome of the new life when Baptized Christians gather in the name of the Triune God, to declare His glory, and to offer up requests in His name.

## VIII Baptism the Mark the Final 'New Life' — Baptism and Eschatology

The promise of our Lord, “Lo, I am with you always to the end of the age,” is a promise connected with baptism. “Go, make disciples, baptize, and teach, because I am with you till this world shall end and I shall usher in the new world.” Thus, baptism stretches from the resurrection of Jesus Christ to the last day and it promises to all who receive this baptism in faith a part in the eschatological kingdom of Jesus Christ when he shall come in glory. Every baptism points to the last day. Baptism is like a rope that attaches the recipient to the glory of the Last Day. By the word in baptism, we learn to know the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. But the word is a promise that what we hear with our ears we will more fully see with our eyes. In baptism, God knows us, but then we will know Him in the same way he knows us. Baptism not only promises that the Christ who has been promised to the church will be more fully revealed, but it also promises a radical change in our dead bodies. In Romans 6, Paul speaks of the analogy of the dying and rising of Christ in comparison to the death of the old man and the resurrection of the new man in Christ, which results from our Baptism. But the power of Baptism is simply more than ethical power for the new life. Baptism is the very power and promise of God that our dead bodies shall be resurrected from the grave. “We were buried therefore with him by Baptism, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might. talk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.”

Baptism has something to say to my ethical existence; but much more has it something to say to my future physical existence, which lies shrouded in darkness and doubt. Baptism is the promise of the future resurrection. The new life in Baptism happens now, but the final new life is still in the future. This is the clear meaning of St. Paul’s words because he writes not “we are like” but we “shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his.” Thus, the death and burial of the Baptized believing Christian is only part of the process of Baptism. What began in Baptism; what was nourished through the preached word; what is buried; shall also be resurrected from the grave because of the promise and power of baptism. This is the final new life.<sup>139</sup>

The book of Revelation is the story of the end of time. Of course, in heaven, we will not be engaged in baptizing activities, because Baptism belongs to the proclamation of the Gospel in the kingdom of grace, not of glory. But the effects of baptism will stretch into the final glorification. However, the language of the last chapter of the book is strongly reminiscent of baptism. “The river of the water of life”<sup>140</sup> which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb certainly must suggest baptism, as the graces that flow from God through baptism to those who are saved. The water of the new life of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus.

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<sup>139</sup> For the preacher who follows Bultmann the only resurrection that can take place is the existential one. Paul teaches that the resurrection from sin shall certainly be followed by the resurrection of the body.

<sup>140</sup> Revelation 22: 1.

culminates in the water of heaven, which is eternally satisfying.<sup>141</sup> In John, chapter 1, the Lamb of God comes to those who in faith are baptized, Now the Baptized sees the Lamb of God, with water coming from his throne. Those who gather around. The throne are those who have His name upon their foreheads.<sup>142</sup> This suggests those who are baptized, since baptism was the application of water to the head. By baptism the name of God was imprinted eternally, so far as God is concerned, on the soul or forehead of the believer, The baptizing activity of the church will not be completed till all the ransomed children appear before God to receive that great blessing once promised to Abraham in circumcision, preached by the apostles, and given to all the saints of God.

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<sup>141</sup> John is responsible for both the Gospel written in his name and the book of Revelation. Water for John suggests Baptism.

<sup>142</sup> Revelation 22:4