

# Holy Baptism

An Anthology



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# 1. Introduction

*Here you see again how highly and precious we should esteem Baptism, because in it we obtain such an unspeakable treasure.*

-Martin Luther, The Large Catechism

What are these “unspeakable treasures” of baptism? Forgiveness of sins, life, salvation, rescue from death and the devil, the gift of the Holy Spirit, adoption into the family of God, being buried with Christ and raised with Him into a new life, all of these gifts, and more, the Lord Jesus gives to us in baptism. In baptism we put on Christ. In baptism our sins are washed away. In baptism we are washed clean and given a good conscience. In baptism we have (as Luther reminds us) enough to study our entire lives.

Baptism is also a controversial theological topic. What is baptism? Who should be baptized? How should baptism be administered? Most importantly: according to the Word of God, what does baptism accomplish?

This book is intended to give you a good overview of what many of our fathers in the faith taught on baptism. Other texts could have been selected, but offerings here are presented in the hope that you would grow and be strengthened in your understanding of baptism, and delight more and more in the magnificent treasure that it truly is for you.

All of the selections were taken from works that are no longer under copyright. This means that many selections

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often had outdated English. We have tried to lightly edit all the works to smooth out all of the English to make it an enjoyable read while not straying too far from the editions we were working with.

Each section will give you a brief introduction about the work. You can read straight through or jump to various sections as you desire.

Before diving in, let us pray:

Almighty and most merciful God and Father, I thank and praise You that You graciously preserve and enlarge Your family and have granted me the new birth in Holy Baptism and made me a member of Your Son, Jesus Christ, and an heir of Your heavenly kingdom. I humbly implore You that, as I have now become Your child, You would keep me in my baptismal grace that according to all Your good pleasure I may faithfully grow and continue to lead a godly life to the praise and honor of Your holy name and finally with all Your saints obtain the promised inheritance in heaven; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

May God grant us joy and confidence in His great gift of baptism.

Pastors Andrew Packer and Bryan Wolfmueller

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## 2. Luther's Small Catechism

*Luther finished the Small Catechism in May of 1529. For nearly 500 years it has remained a beautiful summary of the Christian faith. Luther's questions and answers on Baptism are something that every Christian should seek to know by heart. Everything else you read in this anthology is summarized here.*

### The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

As the head of the family should teach it in a simple way to his household.

**First.**

#### **What is Baptism?**

*Answer:* Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God's command and connected with God's Word.

#### **Which is that word of God?**

*Answer:* Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Matthew: Go into all the world and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

**Secondly.**

**What does Baptism give or profit?**

*Answer:* It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

**Which are such words and promises of God?**

*Answer:* Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.

**Thirdly.**

**How can water do such great things?**

*Answer:* It is not the water indeed that does them, but the word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such word of God in the water. For without the word of God the water is simple water and no baptism. But with the word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying.



**Fourthly.**

**What does such baptizing with water signify?**

*Answer:* It signifies that the old Adam in us should, by daily contrition and repentance, be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and, again, a new man daily come forth and arise; who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.

**Where is this written?**

*Answer:* St. Paul says Romans, chapter 6: We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that, just as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.



## 3. Luther's Large Catechism

*Luther's Large Catechism was finished in March of 1529, so it came first. Sadly, this rich treasure has largely been buried and forgotten among modern Lutherans. In this Catechism you get a glimpse of how much Luther has summarized in the Small Catechism and how much more there still is to know and understand. As Luther said in the Large Catechism, you could spend your whole life studying baptism and never completely exhaust its riches or wonders.*

### Holy Baptism

We have now finished the three chief parts of the common Christian doctrine. Besides these we have yet to speak of our two Sacraments instituted by Christ, of which also every Christian ought to have at least an ordinary, brief instruction, because without them there can be no Christian; although, alas! hitherto no instruction concerning them has been given.

But, in the first place, we take up Baptism, by which we are first received into the Christian Church. However, in order that it may be readily understood, we will treat it in an orderly manner, and keep only to that which it is necessary for us to know. For how it is to be maintained and defended against heretics and sects we will commend to the learned.

In the first place, we must above all things know well the words upon which Baptism is founded, and to which

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everything refers that is to be said on the subject, namely, where the Lord Christ speaks in Matthew 28:19:

Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise in St. Mark 16:16: He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believes not shall be damned.

In these words, you must note, in the first place, that here stand God's commandment and institution, lest we doubt that Baptism is divine, not devised nor invented by men. For as truly as I can say, No man has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer out of his head, but they are revealed and given by God Himself, so also I can boast that Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved, lest anyone regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing, and that external things are of no benefit. But let it be ever so much an external thing, here stand God's Word and command which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. But what God institutes and commands cannot be a vain, but must be a most precious thing, though in appearance it were of less value than a straw.

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If hitherto people could consider it a great thing when the Pope with his letters and bulls dispensed indulgences and confirmed altars and churches, solely because of the letters and seals, we ought to esteem Baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it, and, besides, it is performed in His name. For these are the words, Go, baptize; however, not in your name, but in the name of God.

For to be baptized in the name of God is to be baptized not by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own work. From this fact everyone may himself readily infer that it is a far higher work than any work performed by a man or a saint. For what work greater than the work of God can we do?

But here the devil is busy deluding us with false appearances, and leading us away from the work of God to our own works. For there is a much more splendid appearance when a Carthusian does many great and difficult works; and we all think much more of that which we do and merit ourselves. 12 But the Scriptures teach thus: Even though we collect in one mass the works of all the monks, however splendidly they may shine, they would not be as noble and good as if God should pick up a straw. Why? Because the person is nobler and better. Here, then, we must not estimate the person according to the works, but the works according to the person, from whom they must derive their nobility. But insane reason will not regard this, and because Baptism does

not shine like the works which we do, it is to be esteemed as nothing.

From this now learn a proper understanding of the subject, and how to answer the question what Baptism is, namely thus, that it is not mere ordinary water, but water comprehended in God's Word and command, and sanctified thereby, so that it is nothing else than a divine water; not that the water in itself is nobler than other water, but that God's Word and command are added.

Therefore it is pure wickedness and blasphemy of the devil that now our new spirits, to mock at Baptism, omit from it God's Word and institution, and look upon it in no other way than as water which is taken from the well, and then blather and say: How is a handful of water to help the soul? Aye, my friend, who does not know that water is water if tearing things asunder is what we are after? But how dare you thus interfere with God's order, and tear away the most precious treasure with which God has connected and enclosed it, and which He will not have separated? For the kernel in the water is God's Word or command and the name of God, which is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth.

Comprehend the difference, then, that Baptism is quite another thing than all other water; not on account of the natural quality but because something more noble is here added; for God Himself stakes His honor, His power and might on it. Therefore it is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water, and in whatever other terms we can praise it,-all on account of the Word,

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which is a heavenly, holy Word, that no one can sufficiently extol, for it has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do [since it has all the virtue and power of God comprised in it].  
18 Hence also it derives its essence as a Sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught [in Latin]: *Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum*. That is, when the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament, that is, a holy and divine matter and sign.

Therefore we always teach that the Sacraments and all external things which God ordains and institutes should not be regarded according to the coarse, external mask, as we regard the shell of a nut, but as the Word of God is included therein.

For thus we also speak of the parental estate and of civil government. If we propose to regard them in as far as they have noses, eyes, skin, and hair, flesh and bones, they look like Turks [Muslims] and heathen, and someone might start up and say: Why should I esteem them more than others? But because the commandment is added: Honor thy father and thy mother, I behold a different man, adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God. The commandment (I say) is the chain of gold about his neck, yea, the crown upon his head, which shows to me how and why one must honor this flesh and blood.

Thus, and much more even, you must honor Baptism and esteem it glorious on account of the Word, since He Himself has honored it both by words and deeds; moreover, confirmed it with miracles from heaven. For do you think it

was a jest that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty?

Therefore I exhort again that these two, the water and the Word, by no means be separated from one another and parted. For if the Word is separated from it, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bath-keeper's baptism. But when it is added, as God has ordained, it is a Sacrament, and is called Christ-baptism. Let this be the first part, regarding the essence and dignity of the holy Sacrament.

In the second place, since we now know what Baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted; that is, what it profits, gives, and works. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely, to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, that he be saved. But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with Him forever.

Here you see again how highly and precious we should esteem Baptism, because in it we obtain such an unspeakable treasure, which also indicates sufficiently that it cannot be ordinary mere water. For mere water could not do such a thing, but the Word does it, and (as said above) the fact that



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the name of God is comprehended therein. But where the name of God is, there must be also life and salvation, that it may indeed be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water; for by the Word such power is imparted to Baptism that it is a laver [washing] of regeneration, as St. Paul also calls it, Titus 3:5.

But as our would-be wise, new spirits assert that faith alone saves, and that works and external things avail nothing, we answer: It is true, indeed, that nothing in us is of any avail but faith, as we shall hear still further. But these blind guides are unwilling to see this, namely, that faith must have something which it believes, that is, of which it takes hold, and upon which it stands and rests. Thus faith clings to the water, and believes that it is Baptism, in which there is pure salvation and life; not through the water (as we have sufficiently stated), but through the fact that it is embodied in the Word and institution of God, and the name of God inheres in it. Now, if I believe this, what else is it than believing in God as in Him who has given and planted His Word into this ordinance, and proposes to us this external thing wherein we may apprehend such a treasure?

Now, they are so mad as to separate faith, and that to which faith clings and is bound, though it be something external. Yea, it shall and must be something external, that it may be apprehended by the senses, and understood and thereby be brought into the heart, as indeed the entire Gospel is an external, verbal preaching. In short, what God does and works in us He proposes to work through such external ordinances. Wherever, therefore, He speaks, yea, in

whichever direction or by whatever means He speaks, in that place faith must look, and to that it must hold. 31 Now here we have the words: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. To what else do they refer than to Baptism, that is, to the water comprehended in God's ordinance? Hence it follows that whoever rejects Baptism rejects the Word of God, faith, and Christ, who directs us thither and binds us to Baptism.

In the third place, since we have learned the great benefit and power of Baptism, let us see further who is the person that receives what Baptism gives and profits. This is again most beautifully and clearly expressed in the words: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water. For, since these blessings are here presented and promised in the words in and with the water, they cannot be received in any other way than by believing them with the heart. Without faith it profits nothing, notwithstanding it is in itself a divine superabundant treasure. Therefore this single word (He that believes) affects this so much that it excludes and repels all works which we can do, in the opinion that we obtain and merit salvation by them. For it is determined that whatever is not faith avails nothing nor receives anything.

But if they say, as they are accustomed: Still Baptism is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation; what, then, becomes of faith? Answer: Yes, our works, indeed, avail nothing for salvation; Baptism, however, is not our work, but God's (for, as was stated, you must put Christ-baptism far

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away from a bath-keeper's baptism). God's works, however, are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude, but demand, faith; for without faith they could not be apprehended. For by suffering the water to be poured upon you, you have not yet received Baptism in such a manner that it benefits you anything; but it becomes beneficial to you if you have yourself baptized with the thought that this is according to God's command and ordinance, and besides in God's name, in order that you may receive in the water the promised salvation. Now, this the fist cannot do, nor the body; but the heart must believe it.

Thus you see plainly that there is here no work done by us, but a treasure which He gives us, and which faith apprehends; just as the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross is not a work, but a treasure comprehended in the Word, and offered to us and received by faith. Therefore they do us violence by exclaiming against us as though we preach against faith; while we alone insist upon it as being of such necessity that without it nothing can be received nor enjoyed.

Thus we have these three parts which it is necessary to know concerning this Sacrament, especially that the ordinance of God is to be held in all honor, which alone would be sufficient, though it be an entirely external thing, like the commandment, Honor your father and your mother, which refers to bodily flesh and blood. Therein we regard not the flesh and blood, but the commandment of God in which they are comprehended, and on account of which the flesh is called father and mother; so also, though we had no more than these words, Go and baptize, etc., it would be necessary

for us to accept and do it as the ordinance of God. Now there is not only God's commandment and injunction, but also the promise, on account of which it is still far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained, and is, in short, so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot comprehend it. But it requires skill to believe this, for the treasure is not wanting, but this is wanting that men apprehend it and hold it firmly.

Therefore every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and to practice all his life; for he has always enough to do to believe firmly what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts. In short, it is so transcendent that if timid nature could realize it, it might well doubt whether it could be true. For consider, if there were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, even though they died, of restoring them speedily to life, so that they would thereafter live forever, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain, so that because of the throng of the rich no one could find access! But here in Baptism there is brought free to every one's door such a treasure and medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive.

Thus we must regard Baptism and make it profitable to ourselves, that when our sins and conscience oppress us, we strengthen ourselves and take comfort and say: Nevertheless I am baptized; but if I am baptized, it is promised me that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body. For that is the reason why these two things are done in

Baptism, namely, that the body, which can apprehend nothing but the water, is sprinkled, and, in addition, the word is spoken for the soul to apprehend. Now, since both, the water and the Word, are one Baptism, therefore body and soul must be saved and live forever: the soul through the Word which it believes, but the body because it is united with the soul and also apprehends Baptism as it is able to apprehend it. We have, therefore, no greater jewel in body and soul, for by it we are made holy and are saved, which no other kind of life, no work upon earth, can attain.

Let this suffice respecting the nature, blessing, and use of Baptism, for it answers the present purpose.

### **Of Infant Baptism.**

Here a question occurs by which the devil, through his sects, confuses the world, namely, Of Infant Baptism, whether children also believe, and are justly baptized. Concerning this we say briefly: Let the simple dismiss this question from their minds, and refer it to the learned. But if you wish to answer, then answer thus:-

That the Baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from His own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized, and has given them the Holy Spirit; and that there are yet many even to-day in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Spirit both because of their doctrine and life; as it is also given to us by the grace of God that we can explain the Scriptures and come to the knowledge of Christ, which is impossible without the

Holy Spirit. But if God did not accept the baptism of infants, He would not give the Holy Spirit nor any of His gifts to any of them; in short, during this long time unto this day no man upon earth could have been a Christian. Now, since God confirms Baptism by the gifts of His Holy Spirit, as is plainly perceptible in some of the church fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Hus, and others, who were baptized in infancy, and since the holy Christian Church cannot perish until the end of the world, they must acknowledge that such infant baptism is pleasing to God. For He can never be opposed to Himself, or support falsehood and wickedness, or for its promotion impart His grace and Spirit. This is indeed the best and strongest proof for the simple-minded and unlearned. For they shall not take from us or overthrow this article: I believe a holy Christian Church, the communion of saints.

Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not; for on that account Baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the Word and command of God. This now is perhaps somewhat acute, but it rests entirely upon what I have said, that Baptism is nothing else than water and the Word of God in and with each other, that is, when the Word is added to the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith be wanting. For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid even though it be wrongly received or employed; since it is not bound (as stated) to our faith, but to the Word.

For even though a Jew should today come dishonestly and with evil purpose, and we should baptize him in all good

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faith, we must say that his baptism is nevertheless genuine. For here is the water together with the Word of God, even though he does not receive it as he should, just as those who unworthily go to the Sacrament receive the true Sacrament, even though they do not believe.

Thus you see that the objection of the sectarians is vain. For (as we have said) even though infants did not believe, which, however, is not the case, yet their baptism as now shown would be valid, and no one should rebaptize them; just as nothing is detracted from the Sacrament though some one approach it with evil purpose, and he could not be allowed on account of his abuse to take it a second time the selfsame hour, as though he had not received the true Sacrament at first; for that would mean to blaspheme and profane the Sacrament in the worst manner. How dare we think that God's Word and ordinance should be wrong and invalid because we make a wrong use of it?

Therefore I say, if you did not believe then believe now and say thus: The baptism indeed was right, but I, alas! did not receive it aright. For I myself also, and all who are baptized, must speak thus before God: I come hither in my faith and in that of others, yet I cannot rest in this, that I believe, and that many people pray for me; but in this I rest, that it is Thy Word and command. Just as I go to the Sacrament, trusting not in my faith, but in the Word of Christ; whether I am strong or weak, that I commit to God. But this I know, that He bids me go, eat and drink, etc., and gives me His body and blood; that will not deceive me or prove false to me.

Thus we do also in infant baptism. We bring the child in the conviction and hope that it believes, and we pray that God may grant it faith; but we do not baptize it upon that, but solely upon the command of God. Why so? Because we know that God does not lie. I and my neighbor and, in short, all men, may err and deceive, but the Word of God cannot err.

Therefore they are presumptuous, clumsy minds that draw such inferences and conclusions as these: Where there is not the true faith, there also can be no true Baptism. Just as if I would infer: If I do not believe, then Christ is nothing; or thus: If I am not obedient, then father, mother, and government are nothing. Is that a correct conclusion, that whenever any one does not do what he ought, the thing in itself shall be nothing and of no value? 59 My dear, just invert the argument and rather draw this inference: For this very reason Baptism is something and is right, because it has been wrongly received. For if it were not right and true in itself, it could not be misused nor sinned against. The saying is [in Latin]: *Abusus non tollit, sed confirmat substantiam*. That is - Abuse does not destroy the essence, but confirms it. For gold is not the less gold though a harlot wears it in sin and shame.

Therefore let it be decided that Baptism always remains true, retains its full essence, even though a single person should be baptized, and he, in addition, should not believe truly. For God's ordinance and Word cannot be made variable or be altered by men. But these people, the fanatics, are so blinded that they do not see the Word and command of God, and regard Baptism and the magistrates only as they regard water in the brook or in pots, or as any other man; and because they



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do not see faith nor obedience, they conclude that they are to be regarded as invalid. Here lurks a concealed seditious devil, who would like to tear the crown from the head of authority and then trample it under foot, and, in addition, pervert and bring to naught all the works and ordinances of God. Therefore we must be watchful and well armed, and not allow ourselves to be directed nor turned away from the Word, in order that we may not regard Baptism as a mere empty sign, as the fanatics dream.

Lastly, we must also know what Baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such an external sign and ceremony for the Sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church. But the act or ceremony is this, that we are sunk under the water, which passes over us, and afterwards are drawn out again. These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of Baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued. For this must be practiced without ceasing, that we ever keep purging away whatever is of the old Adam, and that that which belongs to the new man come forth. But what is the old man? It is that which is born in us from Adam, angry, hateful, envious, unchaste, stingy, lazy, haughty, yea, unbelieving, infected with all vices, and having by nature nothing good in it. Now, when we come into the kingdom of Christ, these things must daily decrease, that the longer we live we become more gentle, more patient,

more meek, and ever withdraw more and more from unbelief, avarice, hatred, envy, haughtiness.

This is the true use of Baptism among Christians, as signified by baptizing with water. Where this, therefore, is not practiced, but the old man is left unbridled, so as to continually become stronger, that is not using Baptism, but striving against Baptism. For those who are without Christ cannot but daily become worse, according to the proverb which expresses the truth, "Worse and worse-the longer, the worse." If a year ago one was proud and greedy, then he is much prouder and more greedy this year, so that the vice grows and increases with him from his youth up. A young child has no special vice; but when it grows up, it becomes unchaste and impure, and when it reaches maturity, real vices begin to prevail the longer, the more.

Therefore the old man goes unrestrained in his nature if he is not checked and suppressed by the power of Baptism. On the other hand, where men have become Christians, he daily decreases until he finally perishes. That is truly to be buried in Baptism, and daily to come forth again. Therefore the external sign is appointed not only for a powerful effect, but also for a signification. Where, therefore, faith flourishes with its fruits, there it has no empty signification, but the work [of mortifying the flesh] accompanies it; but where faith is wanting, it remains a mere unfruitful sign.

And here you see that Baptism, both in its power and signification, comprehends also the third Sacrament, which has been called repentance, as it is really nothing else than

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Baptism. For what else is repentance but an earnest attack upon the old man [that his lusts be restrained] and entering upon a new life? Therefore, if you live in repentance, you walk in Baptism, which not only signifies such a new life, but also produces, begins, and exercises it. For therein are given grace, the Spirit, and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and become strong.

Therefore our Baptism abides forever; and even though some one should fall from it and sin, nevertheless we always have access thereto, that we may again subdue the old man. But we need not again be sprinkled with water; for though we were put under the water a hundred times, it would nevertheless be only one Baptism, although the operation and signification continue and remain. Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism, that we repeat and practice what we began before, but abandoned.

This I say lest we fall into the opinion in which we were for a long time, imagining that our Baptism is something past, which we can no longer use after we have fallen again into sin. The reason is that it is regarded only according to the external act once performed [and completed]. And this arose from the fact that St. Jerome wrote that repentance is the second plank by which we must swim forth and cross over after the ship is broken, on which we step and are carried across when we come into the Christian Church. Thereby the use of Baptism has been abolished so that it can profit us no longer. Therefore the statement is not correct, or at any rate not rightly understood. For the ship never breaks, because (as we have said) it is the ordinance of God, and not a work of

ours; but it happens, indeed, that we slip and fall out of the ship. Yet if any one falls out, let him see to it that he swims up and clings to it till he again comes into it and lives in it, as he had formerly begun.

Thus it appears what a great, excellent thing Baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and then daily strengthens the new man; and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this estate of misery to eternal glory.

For this reason let everyone esteem his Baptism as a daily dress in which he is to walk constantly, that he may ever be found in the faith and its fruits, that he suppress the old man and grow up in the new. For if we would be Christians, we must practice the work whereby we are Christians. But if any one falls away from it, let him again come into it. For just as Christ, the Mercy-seat, does not recede from us or forbid us to come to Him again, even though we sin, so all His treasure and gifts also remain. If, therefore, we have once in Baptism obtained forgiveness of sin, it will remain every day, as long as we live, that is, as long as we carry the old man about our neck.

## 4. The Augsburg Confession

*The Augsburg Confession was presented before the emperor on June 25th, 1530. It was written by Philip Melancthon. It is this Confession that set Lutherans apart from the corruptions of doctrine of the church of its day and gave them their own identity.*

### **Article IX. Of Baptism.**

Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God, and that children are to be baptized who, being offered to God through Baptism, are received into God's grace.

They condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism.



## 5. The Apology of the Augsburg Confession

*Melanchthon finished The Apology of the Augsburg Confession in April of 1531. It is the Lutheran response to the Pope's attempt to show why the Augsburg Confession should be rejected.*

### **Article IX. Of Baptism.**

The Ninth Article has been approved, in which we confess that Baptism is necessary to salvation, and that children are to be baptized, and that the baptism of children is not in vain, but is necessary and effectual to salvation. And since the Gospel is taught among us purely and diligently, by God's favor we receive also from it this fruit, that in our Churches no Anabaptists have arisen [have not gained ground in our Churches], because the people have been fortified by God's Word against the wicked and seditious faction of these robbers. And as we condemn quite a number of other errors of the Anabaptists, we condemn this also, that they dispute that the baptism of little children is profitable. For it is very certain that the promise of salvation pertains also to little children [that the divine promises of grace and of the Holy Spirit belong not alone to the old, but also to children]. It does not, however, pertain to those who are outside of Christ's Church, where there is neither Word nor Sacraments, because the kingdom of Christ exists only with the Word and

Sacraments. Therefore it is necessary to baptize little children, that the promise of salvation may be applied to them, according to Christ's command, Matt. 28:19: Baptize all nations. Just as here salvation is offered to all, so Baptism is offered to all, to men, women, children, infants. It clearly follows, therefore, that infants are to be baptized, because with Baptism salvation [the universal grace and treasure of the Gospel] is offered.

Secondly, it is manifest that God approves of the baptism of little children. Therefore the Anabaptists, who condemn the baptism of little children, believe wickedly. That God, however, approves of the baptism of little children is shown by this, namely, that God gives the Holy Spirit to those thus baptized [to many who have been baptized in childhood]. For if this baptism would be in vain, the Holy Spirit would be given to none, none would be saved, and finally there would be no Church. [For there have been many holy men in the Church who have not been baptized otherwise.] This reason, even taken alone, can sufficiently establish good and godly minds against the godless and fanatical opinions of the Anabaptists.



## 6. The Smalcald Articles III.V

*When Luther wrote the Smalcald Articles, finishing them in 1537, he thought he was near death. So, many consider this to be Luther's "last will and testament." It also gives you a concise two-paragraph summary of his view on baptism.*

### **Article V. Of Baptism.**

Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in the water, commanded by His institution, or, as Paul says, a washing in the Word; as also Augustine says: Let the Word come to the element, and it becomes a Sacrament. And for this reason we do not hold with Thomas and the monastic preachers [or Dominicans] who forget the Word (God's institution) and say that God has imparted to the water a spiritual power, which through the water washes away sin. Nor [do we agree] with Scotus and the Barefooted monks [Minorites or Franciscan monks], who teach that, by the assistance of the divine will, Baptism washes away sins, and that this ablution occurs only through the will of God, and by no means through the Word or water.

Of the baptism of children, we hold that children ought to be baptized. For they belong to the promised redemption made through Christ, and the Church should administer it [Baptism and the announcement of that promise] to them.



## 7. Outlines of Doctrinal Theology

*August Lawrence Graebner (1849-1904) never intended for this work to be put into a book, but pastors begged him for it as Concordia seminary students were giving out copies of it without his knowledge. Thanks be to God for those students. Graebner gives a summary of the doctrine and then everything that follows are the proof texts for each part of the summary. (Page 288ff.)*

### **BAPTISM.**

The sacrament of baptism is the act of sprinkling,[1] pouring,[2] or by immersion applying upon a living human person[3] water[4] in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,[5] the triune God, who is himself present with the water connected with the sacramental word[6] and efficaciously offers the gifts of his grace[7] and operates toward their acceptance, as in infants,[8] or toward perseverance in and greater assurance of their possession, as in adults who have been previously regenerated by the word.[9]

[1]

*Hebr. 10:22:* 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.

*1 Cor. 10:2:* And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.

*Exod. 24:6-8:* And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words.

*Hebrews 9:19-20:* For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people, saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you.

*Num. 8:7:* And thus shall you do unto them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying upon them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean.

*Num. 19:18-19:* And a clean person shall take hyssop, and dip it in the water, and sprinkle it upon the tent, and upon all the vessels, and upon the persons that were there, and upon him that touched a bone, or one slain, or one dead, or a grave: and the clean person shall sprinkle upon the unclean on the third day, and on the seventh day: and on the seventh day he shall purify himself, and wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and shall be clean at evening.

*Mark 7:4:* And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not. And many other things there are, which they have received to hold, such as the washing of cups, pots, brasen vessels, and of tables.

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*Luke 5:14:* And he charged him to tell no man: but go, and show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing, according as Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.

*Ezek. 36:25:* Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

*Hebr. 9:10:* Which stood only in meats and drinks, and diverse washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

*Acts 2:41:* Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls.

*Acts 10:47:* Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized?

[2]

*Matt. 3:11:* I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that comes after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Spirit, and with fire.

*Prov. 1:23:* Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you.

*Joel 2:28:* And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. Cf. Acts 2:16-17.

[3]

*Matt. 28:19:* Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

## Holy Baptism Anthology

*Acts 8:35-38:* Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came upon a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what hinders me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

*John 3:5-6:* Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

*Mark 10:14:* But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God.

*Acts 2:39:* For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call.

*Acts 16:15:* And when she was baptized, and her household, she begged us, saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide there.

*Acts 16:33:* And he took them the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes; and immediately he and all his family were baptized.

*Col. 2:11-12:* In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: buried with him in baptism, wherein also you are risen with him through

the faith of the operation of God, who has raised him from the dead.

[4]

*John 1:31*: And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore I have come baptizing with water.

*John 3:5, 23*: Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. (23) And John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

*Acts 10:47*: Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Spirit as well as we?

*Acts 8:38*: And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.

[5]

*Matt. 28:19*: Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

[6]

*Matt. 3:16-17*: And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up immediately out of the water: and lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: and lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

## Holy Baptism Anthology

*Matt. 28:19:* Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

*John 3:5:* Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

*1 John 5:6:* This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

*Eph. 5:26:* That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

[7]

*Acts 22:16:* And now why do you tarry? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.

*Acts 2:38:* Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

*Luke 3:3:* And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

*Eph. 5:26:* That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

*1 Pet. 3:21:* There is also an antitype which now saves us - baptism, (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.



[8]

*Gal. 3:26-27:* For you are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

*Titus 3:5-7:* Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior; that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

*Rom. 6:3-4:* Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. Cf. Col, 2, 11. 12. See above sub 4.

[9]

*Acts 8:35-38:* Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus. And as they went on their way, they came upon a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what hinders me from being baptized? And Philip said, If you believe with all your heart, you may. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.



## 8. Compend of Lutheran Theology

*Dr. Leonard Hutter (professor in Wittenberg from 1596 until his death in 1616) is not well known in English Lutheranism but he taught Johann Gerhard - that alone should cause us to give thanks to God for his ministry. The Compend of Lutheran Theology is quite helpful and concise, and we are certain you will give thanks to God for his wonderful summary of baptism as well. (pages 170-177.)*

### ARTICLE XX. OF HOLY BAPTISM.

1. *What is baptism?* Baptism is not mere water, but that water which is comprehended in God's command, and connected with his word. (Smaller Catechism.)

2. *What is that word of God?* Matt. 28:19. "Go therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Mark 16:16. "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believes not shall be damned."

3. *Is baptism necessary to salvation?* Certainly; on account of the divine injunction. "For what God has instituted and commanded, cannot be a vain thing, but must be exceedingly valuable, even if in appearance it should be more insignificant than a shadow." (Larger Catechism. Compare Augsburg Confession, Art. IX.)

4. *What does baptism confer or profit?* It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives everlasting salvation to all who believe it, as the words and promises of God declare.

Secondly, since we know what baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it was instituted, that is, what it profits, gives, and works. This can be best understood from the words of Christ, namely: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." Matt. 16:16. Therefore understand in all simplicity, that it is the power, work, use, fruit, and design of baptism, to save. For no one is baptized that he may be made a prince, but that he may be saved, as the words of institution inform us. But it is well known that to be saved means nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and Satan, to come into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with him forever. (Compare Large Catechism.)

5. *Does Holy Scripture teach the same concerning the benefit and efficacy of baptism?* Yes; for St. Paul to Titus, chap. 3:5, says, "But according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which he also shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." And Christ himself confirms this, John 3:5: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."

And St. Peter, 1 Epistle, chap. 3:21, says "Baptism does also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the

flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ."

6. *How can water do such great things?* Water indeed does not do it, but the Word of God, which accompanies and is connected with the water, and our faith, which relies on this Word of God, connected with the water. For the water, without the Word of God, is simply water and no baptism; but with the Word of God it is a baptism, that is, a gracious water of life, and a washing of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says to Titus, in the third chapter. (Smaller Catechism.)

7. *Then the water in baptism dare not be separated from the Word of God?* The water in baptism may be distinguished from the Word of God, but not separated from it. For this water is so sanctified by the Word of God, that it is none other than divine water: not as if this water in itself and of itself were better than every other water, but because the Word and command of God is added to it. If, therefore, the Word is separated from the water, it is not water other than that which is used in ordinary life; but if this Word is connected with it, then it is a sacrament and the baptism instituted by Christ.

From this learn to understand correctly, and be able to answer the question, What is baptism?—namely, thus: that it is not merely common water, but a water comprehended in the Word and command of God, and thereby sanctified, that it is nothing else than a divine water not that the water in itself is nobler than other water, but that the Word and command of God is joined to it. It is therefore purely a piece

of rascality and the mockery of the devil, when our new spirits, in order to revile baptism, now omit the Word and order of God from it, looking at nothing but the water drawn from the well, and then vent their spleen: What good shall a handful of water do to souls? Yes, my friend, who does not know that water is water, if pulling asunder is to prevail?

But how dare you thus interfere with the arrangement of God, and tear away the best jewel, with which God has connected and set it, and which he will not have removed from it: for this kernel in the water is the Word and command of God, and the name of God, which is a treasure, greater and nobler than heaven and earth. Therefore comprehend the difference, that baptism is quite different from all other waters, not because of its natural essence, but because something nobler is joined to it. God himself honors it and aids it by his might and power. It is therefore not merely a natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water, and deserving of all additional praise which can be given to it, solely on account of the Word of God, which is a heavenly, holy Word, which no one can praise sufficiently, for it has divine possessions and power: hence, it also derives its essence, being called a sacrament, as St. Augustine too has taught: "If the Word is joined to the element, or natural essence, it becomes a sacrament, that is, a holy and divine thing and sign." (Larger Catechism.)

8. *Who are to be baptized?* Children, shortly after birth. (Augsburg Confession, Art. IX; Apology, Art. VI; Larger Catechism.)

9. *Prove that little children are to be baptized.*

(1.) Christ has commanded all nations to be baptized, and therefore infants.

(2.) The kingdom of Christ is found only where the Word and sacraments are found: "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John 3:5,15

If infants, therefore, are to be incorporated into the kingdom of Christ, this cannot be done otherwise than by means of baptism.

(3.) The promise of salvation belongs to children also, according to the Word, Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14: "Let the little children come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God." And Matt. 18:10,14: "Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Therefore the means by which the promise of salvation is applied and sealed, also appertain to those little ones.

(4.) God himself has testified that the baptism of children is agreeable to him, by gathering a congregation from the human race, throughout so many centuries, during which this sacrament was applied to children; and this he has done by giving the Holy Spirit to those who were baptized, and by finally saving the greater part of them.

(5.) Baptism has taken the place of circumcision. Col. 2:12. Just as circumcision was applied to children as the sign of the covenant, so also must baptism be used. (Apology, Art. IV; Larger Catechism.)

10. *Then you maintain that all baptized children are truly born again and received into the grace of God?* Yes, this I maintain; for thus saith the Apostle: "Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" Rom. 6:13. And, "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Gal. 3:27. Yes, Christ himself says: "He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Mark 16:16. (Augsburg Confession, Art. IX.)

11. *In this way you seem to maintain that baptized children truly believe in Christ?* Certainly; for that children, through baptism, are presented with true faith by the power of the Holy Spirit, already appears from the fact that they are born again. But regeneration cannot take place without faith. And Christ himself also distinctly assures us that the little children believe in him. Matt. 18:6.

12. *May adults also be baptized?* Yes; as many as come over to our church and are able to make a confession of the true faith.

13. *And do you maintain that all baptized adults are born again, in like manner as children are?* Here a distinction must be made: for if the adults truly believe in their hearts, what they confess with their lips, they receive a truly salutary baptism; but if they harbor craft or hypocrisy, then they indeed receive baptism in full, according to its essence, but not in a salutary manner. For without faith baptism profits nothing; and only faith makes man worthy to receive this salutary and divine water profitably.

In the third place, since we have the great benefit and efficacy of baptism, let us further see, who the person is that



receives what baptism gives and profits; this is again expressed most exactly and clearly, just in these words: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive this divine water profitably. For inasmuch as this is prescribed and promised in these words, accompanying the water, it cannot be otherwise received, than by faith of the heart. Without faith it is of no use, although it is of itself a divine, superabundant treasure. This one word, "He that believes," is, therefore, possessed of so much power as to exclude and repel all works, which we can do, in the opinion that we shall thereby obtain and merit salvation. For it has been decided that whatever is not of faith, adds nothing, neither does it receive anything. (Larger Catechism.)

14. *May baptism be repeated?* It may not; for the baptism is and always will remain true, and its essence unchanged. For that which God has once ordained cannot be subverted or abolished by the unbelief of man.

It is therefore determined that baptism is always right, and will remain in its full essence, even if only one human being were baptized, even though he had not the true faith, for the order and Word of God cannot be moved or changed by men. (Large Catechism)

15. *But if the person baptized should fall from the grace of God, must not the baptism then be repeated?* No; for even if one were to lose the salutary fruit of baptism by his sins, he can afterward return, if he mortify and drown the old man by repentance. But it is not necessary that the water should again be applied to him. (Large Catechism)

16. *How is this?* Because, if such a one were to be immersed in water a hundred times, he would only receive one baptism, namely, that which is the covenant of a good conscience with God. For this covenant continues unchanged on the part of God.

If a person, therefore, falls from the grace of God, after being baptized, but returns by means of true contrition and repentance, the baptism once received immediately begins to be salutary to him.

17. *In the act of baptism what does the immersion into water and the drawing out from it signify?*

It signifies that the old Adam is to be drowned in us by daily contrition and repentance, and that he is to die with all his sins and evil lusts, and again come out and arise a new man, who is to live forever in righteousness and holiness before God. For St. Paul to the Romans, in the sixth chapter, says: "We are buried with him by baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." (Smaller Catechism; compare Larger Catechism.)

## 9. The Doctrinal Theology of the Lutheran Church

*This marvelous work by Heinrich Schmid was published with its final edits in 1876. It is similar to Graebner in that it gives a summary of the doctrine and then proof texts, but in this case the proof texts are taken from the Lutheran Fathers. The numbers in each paragraph in square brackets [] correspond with paragraphs with related references and extended quotations from the Lutheran Fathers. This is probably the most difficult section of the anthology to read but it is worth it. (Pages 540-558.)*

### Of Baptism

Of the two Sacraments, Baptism precedes the Lord's Supper.

[1] We are going to treat the nature of Baptism, the form in which it is to be administered, and the design of its institution.

[1]

Gerhard (IX, 67) "The Sacrament of Baptism must be considered first, as it precedes the Lord's Supper in (1) the time of its institution, for it was divinely established in the very commencement of the New Testament dispensation; (2) in administration, for John and the disciples of Christ baptized before the Lord's Supper was instituted; (3) in order, for Baptism is the first portal to grace; it is the Sacrament of initiation; the Lord's Supper is the Sacrament of confirmation; by Baptism we are regenerated; by the Lord's Supper we are fed and nourished to eternal life. As therefore in nature, so also in grace, we must be born before we are fed; we must be begotten

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before we can grow. By Baptism we are received into the covenant of God; by the Lord's Supper we are preserved in it. By Baptism faith and the other gifts of the Spirit are excited in us; by the Lord's Supper they are increased and confirmed. Baptism was prefigured by circumcision; the Lord's Supper, by the paschal lamb. No one can have access to the Lord's Supper unless he has been baptized; as in the Old Testament none but the circumcised were permitted to eat the paschal lamb."

The Dogmaticians have extensively discussed the question, what relation did John's Baptism sustain to that of Christ? Chemnitz (Ex. C. Trid., II, 66): "The same difference that exists between the word concerning Christ to come, Christ coming, and Christ offered [to men in the preaching of the Gospel], exists also between circumcision, the Baptism of John, and the Baptism of Christ. But although as to the mode of the publication of the doctrine concerning Christ there may be some difference, yet as to its substance it has been the same and has had the same effects on believers in every age. As it is then with the Word, so also is it with circumcision, the Baptism of John, and of the apostles. Nor are these to be too nicely discriminated against. For if these subtleties be allowed, in this way we can also establish the difference between the Baptism performed by the apostles before the passion and resurrection of Christ, and that which they administered afterwards." The question, Whether it was necessary for those who were baptized by John to receive afterwards the Baptism of Christ? Chemnitz leaves undetermined.

All the Dogmaticians agree in not referring to the words "fire and spirit," in Matt. 3:11, to actual Baptism, because Christ,

Acts 1:5, long after Baptism was administered, refers to their fulfillment at a later period; but they understand them as relating to the effusion of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost and the gifts of the Spirit connected with it.

1. Baptism is an act enjoined by the Lord, and accompanied with a promise, Matt. 28:19. Hence we have in Baptism not merely water, and not common water, but also the Word of God. But there is superadded to this a higher efficacy than exists in mere natural water, [2] and it is this which, by means of the water, effects saving grace. [3]

[2]

Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 14): "If you are asked, What is Baptism? answer, that it is not mere water, but such as is comprehended and included in the Word and command of God, and sanctified by them, so that it is nothing else than a water of God, or a divine water; not that it is in itself of more value than other water, but that God's Word and commandment are added to it." (See Smalcald Articles, V, 2, 3.)

The earlier Dogmaticians were satisfied with this simple expression, and hence designate, as the substance of the Sacrament, the external element of water and the Word of the institution and promise. (Chemnitz (Loc. c. Th., III, 161): "The distinction is to be retained, viz., that the substance of Baptism consists in the act and in the words, 'I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.' ") But the later writers speak of a double matter in Baptism, the earthly object, which is natural, pure water, everywhere at hand, and the heavenly object, by which they designate that which they suppose is superadded by the words of the consecration. This most of them consider to be the whole Trinity, others the Holy Spirit, and others the blood of Christ.

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These different views arise from the fact that some of them regard the heavenly object as indicated in the baptismal formula, others in John 3:5, and others again in 1 John 5:6. But there is as little contradiction in these different views of the heavenly object as there is in the passages just cited. (Quenstedt IV, 110): “The opinions of the orthodox on the heavenly object are indeed diverse, but not contradictory, only subordinate.”)

The sense in which the heavenly object is by some regarded as the whole Trinity, by others as the Holy Spirit, and by others as the blood of Christ, is thus explained by Gerhard (concerning the presence of the Trinity) (IX, 133 seq.): “As the name of God is nothing else than God himself, and the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is, according to the institution of Christ, joined with the water of Baptism, it hence follows that the whole Trinity is present by his grace in Baptism, and by the water of Baptism is efficacious to the salvation of men; ... therefore the other substantial part of Baptism is the name of the whole adorable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; that is, the infinite majesty, the ineffable sanctity, the unspeakable goodness, the admirable virtue and grace of the whole Trinity, which, with all its virtue and the benefits of grace, are efficacious by water united to and sanctified by the Word.”

(Concerning the presence of the Holy Spirit): “As the Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity, and as Baptism is administered not only in the name of the Father and the Son, but also of the Holy Spirit, it follows that the Spirit acts efficaciously in, with and by the water of Baptism, works faith, regeneration, and renovation in those who do not strive against God, and seals the covenant of grace in the hearts of the baptized. (The Holy Spirit is named alone, because regeneration is attributed to him as his peculiar work. He makes the water of Baptism a salutary means of regeneration, not as though the other persons were excluded, for the works of the Trinity ad extra are undivided, yet with the order and distinction of persons preserved.) As the Holy Spirit was supernaturally and

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peculiarly united with the dove in which he descended on Christ at his Baptism, so even at the present day is he supernaturally and peculiarly united with the water of Baptism.”

(Concerning the presence of the blood of Christ): “As the Son of God in the fullness of time assumed true human nature, and personally and inseparably united it to himself, it follows that Christ is present in Baptism, not only according to his divine nature, but also in his human nature, and hence that the blood of Christ is by no means to be excluded from Baptism.”

But Gerhard (IX, 137) adds: “Although Christ the God-man is present in Baptism, and by his blood, through the medium of faith, washes us from our sins, yet the most distinguished theologians maintain that the blood of Christ cannot very well be called the other material part of Baptism.”

Most of the Dogmaticians agree in saying, “the heavenly object of Baptism is analogically called the whole sacred Trinity, but peculiarly and terminatively the Holy Spirit. (Hollaz, 1085.)” Calov (IX, 166) attempts to combine the three expressions: “The heavenly object, considered as a whole, is the most holy Trinity, namely, the Father, the Son of God ... (to whose entireness, not the divine nature alone, but also the human nature contributes, as that to which alone also the blood belongs, and of which he became a partaker for our sake), and also the Holy Spirit; and this [i.e., the most holy Trinity] in one expression is called the Word and the name of God, i.e., God himself, threefold and one, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, according to the well-known rule handed down from Augustine: ‘The Word is joined to the element and it becomes a Sacrament.’ This Word of the institution is found in Matt. 28:19.”

The fluctuation of the Dogmaticians in these definitions is also manifest in this, that some suppose the expression, “the heavenly object is the whole Trinity,” signifies nothing more than the other earlier one, viz., “the second essential part [of

Baptism] is the Word," for, in the Word, God is included; while the others (Hutterus, for instance) expressly maintain that the Word is not a substantial part, but only the active (ποιητικὸν) principle of Baptism, which, from this point of view, appears the more correct; and it is from this diversity of views that the difference in the expression of the earlier and later Dogmaticians, as noticed in the previous section, note 6, proceeds.

The opposition of Baier to this mode of expression we have mentioned in the preceding section. In relation to Baptism he says (683): "When it is acknowledged (1) that the words of the institution, besides the water, belong to the substance of Baptism; and (2) from the force of these words it is further acknowledged that the Holy Spirit and the whole Trinity are the author of this Sacrament as a means of grace; and when (3) it is acknowledged that the Holy Spirit and the triune God, wherever and whenever Baptism is rightly administered, is present in the same way, by virtue of his measureless essence: and (4) is present by his grace in such a manner that, being present, he not only seriously offers spiritual benefits through this Sacrament, and (5) enters into the covenant of grace, with the person baptized, never to be broken on his part, and seals it through Baptism; but also (6) in the person baptized who does not resist the divine grace, accomplishes, in this act itself, the work of regeneration and renovation through this Sacrament in such a manner that, (7) not by a separate and peculiar action, but jointly with the water of Baptism, and through it by one undivided action, he enkindles and confirms faith; and that (8) on account of the merit of the God-man, Christ, truly present as to both natures, and on account of his blood shed for our sins; for, just as (9) since faith is conferred by baptism, by this also the blood of Christ is sprinkled in the same sense, as far as his merit is applied by faith.

When, I say, these things are acknowledged and maintained, we may well, as far as the rest is concerned, with



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the more ancient theologians, be silent about the name heavenly object and its almost inexplicable nature, and rather confess a cautious ignorance than profess false knowledge." The assumption of a heavenly object involves that of a "sacramental union, which is the union of true water with the Holy Trinity, and therefore not only with the Father, but also with the incarnate Son and with the Holy Spirit. For, neither is the water given or received without the most Holy Trinity, or without the Holy Spirit, nor the latter or the former without the water; because these two are most closely united in the sacramental act, nor can one be a Sacrament without the other. And this union is not relative only, or figurative, or typical, such as it was in the Sacraments of the Old Testament, but it tenders the celestial object, and is really and truly present; whence water, in its sacramental form, is not to be regarded as mere water, but the laver of regeneration in the Word, and as united with the most Holy Trinity in an ineffable manner, John 3:5; Eph. 5:26; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21; 1 John 1:7." Quenstedt (IV, 112).

[3]

Baier (693): "Baptism may be defined as a sacred action, instituted by Christ, by which men are washed with water, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and are thus regenerated and renewed, that they may secure eternal life."

Smalcald Articles (V, 1): "Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God with washing in water, according to his institution and command, or, as Paul says, Eph. 5:26, the washing of water by the Word."

Hollaz (1080): "Baptism is a sacred and solemn action, divinely instituted, by which men, living and actually born,\* without distinction of sex and age, are washed in water in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, that by this washing of water divine grace, promised in the Gospel, may be applied, conferred upon, and sealed to them."

2. But if we expect such a result from Baptism, it must be administered precisely according to the instructions of the Lord. The consecration must be according to his will, and the act itself administered to the baptized person agreeably to the prescribed mode. [4] If all this be done, then the Baptism is to be regarded as valid, whether the officiating minister be a believer or not, or whether the person baptized believes in the Sacrament or not. [5]

[4]

Gerhard (IX, 137): "The form of Baptism consists in the action, that is, in the immersion of the person baptized into water, or, what is just as well, in the sprinkling or pouring of water, and in the recitation of the words of the institution: 'I baptize you in the name of the Father,' etc.; so that there are, in general, three substantial parts of Baptism to be maintained, which cannot be separated or changed, viz., water, the Word, and the action, which embraces immersion of the person into water, or the sprinkling/pouring of water, and the recitation of the words of the institution.... We do not ascribe to the external recitation of the Word any magical or secret power, when we assert that there would be no Baptism unless it be done in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; but by this we teach and assert that it is incumbent on the true disciples of Christ to adhere with godly simplicity to his Word, and observe his institution with inviolable accuracy."

The significance of the words of the institution employed in the administration of Baptism is thus explained by Gerhard (IX, 132): "When the officiating minister says, 'I baptize you,' etc., the words are to be taken in this sense:

(1) That Baptism is not a ceremony devised by man, but an ordinance of the true God, and a holy Sacrament divinely instituted....

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(2) That he does not administer this Sacrament of his own private will, but in the place of God, the dispenser of whose mysteries and whose minister he is...

(3) That on this water of Baptism the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the one true God, is invoked, that in this action, commanded by him, he may be present, according to his promise, and receive the baptized person into favor...

(4) That the water of Baptism is no longer simply and merely water, but such water through which the whole blessed Trinity desires to be efficacious to the salvation of the subject baptized, and therefore through which the Trinity, in this very action of the baptizing minister, operates efficaciously according to his promise, 'I baptize thee,' etc., i.e., I testify that by this Sacrament you are received into the covenant of grace, that the Father accepts you as his child, that the Son washes you from thy sins in his blood and clothes you with the garment of righteousness, that the Holy Spirit regenerates and renews you to eternal life, so that in this way you may become a child of God the Father forever...

(5) That the person baptized, being thus received by his Sacrament into the covenant of grace, is obligated to know the one true God through his Word, to supplicate, worship, and serve him alone." ...

To the act, as above described, there is added a series of ceremonies and usages more or less important, all of which are, however, not essential to Baptism, but are intended only to render the act more solemn. Gerhard (IX, 308, seq.) specifies these as usual in our Church: "The admonition concerning original sin [since John admonished those coming to his baptism, of the fruitlessness of their lives, Matt. 3:10], the giving of the name [as in circumcision, Luke 1:59], the minor exorcism, the sign of the cross ["to testify that the infant's reception into

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grace occurs only by the merit of Christ crucified"], prayers [after our Lord's example, Matt. 19:14; Mark 10:14], recitation of the Gospel, the imposition of hands, recitation of the Lord's Prayer, the use of sponsors."

Here also belongs the renunciation of Satan ("by which those who are to be baptized solemnly and in express words renounce Satan and all his works and ways"). Concerning exorcism, Gerhard (ib. 310) says: "It is a testimony:

1. Of the spiritual captivity of infants in the kingdom of Satan, because of sin.
2. Of the fact that the Messiah has come, and of the redemption wrought by his work; that the strong man armed is overcome, and the spoils are distributed through Word and Sacraments.
3. Of the divine efficacy belonging to baptism, whereby infants are transferred from the power of darkness into the kingdom of God's Son.
4. Of the chief end of the ministerial office, consisting not only in the application of the benefits of Christ to believers, but also in unceasing warfare against Satan.
5. It is a public confession of the Church against the errors of Pelagians, Anabaptists, Zwinglians. It is approved by the testimonies of the primitive Church.

But our exorcism differs from that of the Papists:

1. Ours rests on human authority, and is an adiaphoron, and of free observance; that of the Papists pretends to rest on apostolic authority.
2. Ours is emblematic, signifying original sin and deliverance therefrom by Christ; to that of the Papists efficacious operation is ascribed."

Chemnitz (Loc. c. Th., III, 161): "Those who omit or reject exorcism with the opinion of and for the same reason as the Anabaptists and Sacramentarians, because they think that

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infants either have no sins, and therefore are not by nature the children of wrath, or under the power of Satan; or, although they are born in sin, yet on account of their birth according to the flesh from believing parents, even before Baptism and without Baptism, are not out of the kingdom of heaven or under the power of darkness, indeed deserve to be rebuked and blamed.... But if this doctrine of original sin, of the power and kingdom of Satan and of the efficacy of Baptism, be granted by an open confession, the substance, integrity, and efficacy of Baptism are not dependent on that prescribed rite of the words of exorcism, but the Church has the liberty of propounding and explaining that doctrine in other words more agreeable to the Scriptures."

The formula in the ancient Church was this: "I adjure you, you unclean spirit, that you come out of this servant of Jesus Christ, in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Baier (692), however, observes: "The words have, it is true, the form of a command, but they are to be taken in the sense of a prayer to God, with confidence, and with innate animosity hence begotten against the enemy to be expelled."

[5]

Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 53): "If the Word is connected with the water, Baptism must be regarded as proper and valid, even if faith is not connected with it. For my faith does not constitute Baptism, but it receives and apprehends it. Baptism is not vitiated or corrupted by men abusing it or not properly receiving it, for it is not bound to our faith, but to the Word of God."

The same is true with regard to the state of mind of the person who administers it, and Baptism even by a heretic is not invalid. Hollaz (1084): "If Baptism be administered by a heretic, who retains the substantial of the ordinance, we must not doubt its efficacy. But if it may be administered in a flourishing church, where an orthodox minister can be procured, it is a

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great sin to ask it of a heretic. But in a church under oppression, in a case of urgent necessity, it may be asked for and received without blame from a heretic who uses the customary formula of Baptism; but then a protest must be added that the infant is not to be bound by this Baptism to embrace false doctrine." Baptism by others than ministers, in case of necessity, is also valid.

Hollaz (1081) says: "Ordinarily, ministers of the Church, legitimately called and ordained, orthodox and of a blameless life, administer Baptism. Extraordinarily, however, and in case of necessity, any godly Christian, skilled in sacred rites, whether male or female, can administer the ordinance."

3. The immediate design of Baptism is, finally, to work saving grace in man. [6] But, as also the Word of God has the like effect, Baptism is intended to produce this result only in such cases in which it is applied at an earlier period than the Word; this is the case with infants who are not yet susceptible to the preaching of the Gospel. [7] But in adults who, with their already developed reason, can understand the preaching of the Gospel, the Word has precedence, and produces its results before the Sacrament. But, in such instances, Baptism serves to seal and establish the gracious result already accomplished by the Word. [8]

[6] Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 24): ... "Hence, conceive of the whole thing as simply as possible, namely, that the power, work, fruit, and end of Baptism is to save men.... But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from the tyranny of sin, death, and the devil, to be transferred into the kingdom of Christ, and to dwell with him forever."

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Gerhard (IX, 148, 157): "As Baptism is not simply water, but water comprehended in, sanctified by, and united to the Word of God, it is not therefore used to wash away the impurity of the body, but it is a divine and salutary means and instrument by which the whole sacred Trinity efficaciously operates for the salvation of man. Although the effects of Baptism are various and multiform, yet, following the apostle, Tit. 3:5, we reduce them all to these two heads, that Baptism is the washing of regeneration (John 3:5), which embraces the gift of faith (Tit. 3:5), the remission of sins (Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3), reception into the covenant of grace (1 Pet. 3:21), adoption as the sons of God (Gal. 3:26), the putting on of Christ (Gal. 3:27), deliverance from the power of Satan and the possession of eternal life (Col. 1:13, 14; Mark 16:16); and renewal (Tit. 3:5), that is, the Holy Spirit is given to him, who begins to renew the intellect, the will, and all the powers of the soul, so that the lost image of God may begin to be restored in him, that the inner man may be renewed (2 Cor. 4:16) that the old man may be put off, and the new one put on (Col. 3:10), that the Spirit may oppose the flesh and rule over it, so that sin may not obtain dominion in the body."

Hollaz, more generally (1095): "The primary design of Baptism is the offering, application, conferring, and sealing of evangelical grace."

Hafenreffer (497): "The fruit or effect of Baptism is regeneration and the remission of sins (John 3:5; Tit. 3:5; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Eph. 5:26), salvation and participation in all the benefits of Christ, into whom we are ingrafted by Baptism (Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27; 1 Cor. 12:13), a good conscience toward God, or the assurance of faith as to the forgiveness of sins (1 Pet. 3:21; 2 Cor. 1:21), newness of life (Rom. 6:3; Col. 2:11)."

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In opposition to the assertion of the Papal Church, that “sin is destroyed by Baptism, so that it no longer exists,” the doctrine of the forgiveness of sins by Baptism is thus more particularly defined: “The guilt and dominion of sin is taken away by Baptism, but not the root or enticement of sin.” (Hollaz, 1096) Ap Conf (I, 35): “(Luther) always wrote that Baptism removes the guilt of original sin, although the material of sin, as they call it, may remain, i.e., concupiscence [evil desire]. He also affirmed of this material, that the Holy Spirit, given by Baptism, begins to mortify concupiscence and creates new emotions in man. Augustine speaks to the same effect when he says: ‘Sin is forgiven in Baptism, not that it does not exist, but that it is not imputed.’”

[7]

Gerhard (IX, 236): “There is no other ordinary means of regeneration than the Word and the Sacrament of Baptism. By the Word infants cannot be influenced, but only adults, who have come to years of discretion. It remains, therefore, that they are regenerated, cleansed from the contagion of original sin, and made partakers of eternal life, through Baptism.”

[8]

Baier (690): “But here, as regards the immediate design [of Baptism] a diversity exists in respect to the different subjects. For faith is at first conferred upon and sealed to all infants alike by Baptism, and by this faith the merit of Christ is applied to them. But adults, who receive faith from hearing the Word before their Baptism, are only sealed and confirmed in their faith by it. (Examples, Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36–38; 16:14, 15, 31, 33; 18:8.) And not only now, when Baptism is received, but afterwards, and throughout



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their whole life, it efficaciously contributes to the confirmation of their faith and further renewal.”

Gerhard (IX, 169): “To infants Baptism is, primarily, the ordinary means of regeneration and purification from sin; ... secondarily, it is the seal of righteousness and the confirmation of faith; to adult believers it serves principally as a seal and testimony of the grace of God, sonship and eternal life, but in a less principal sense it increases renovation and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Infants by Baptism receive the first fruits of the Spirit and of faith; adults, who through the Word have received the first fruits of faith and of the Holy Spirit, procure an increase of these gifts by Baptism.”

Hafenreffer (500): “But what? Suppose one is regenerated by the Word. Does he need Baptism also? And can Baptism be said to be to him the washing of regeneration? Answer: Both. For believers, too, ought to be baptized, unless they are excluded by a case of necessity. And when they are baptized, Baptism is truly to them the washing of regeneration, because it augments regeneration, wrought by the Word, by a wonderful addition; because, also, the sacramental act seals the regeneration of faith to absolute certainty.”

Hence in the case of adults, who are yet to be baptized, faith must be demanded as the condition on which the ordinance affects this blessed end. [9] This cannot be expected of infants; but it does not follow that they are for that reason to be deprived of Baptism, for they need grace as well as adults, and are invited to it by God. It is, therefore, God’s will that they be baptized, and Baptism serves also to create in them this faith. [10] The efficacy of Baptism is not limited to the moment of its administration, but it continues to confer strength upon its subject. Nor is this efficacy lost if, in its

administration, the intended result, because of some hindrance on man's part, be not immediately produced; for still, if the ordinance were properly administered, a covenant has been entered into with God, and thereby there is forever established a disposition on God's part to produce the gracious effect to its full extent, when the individual no longer strives against it. [11]

[9]

Although Baptism, where it is rightly performed, is a Sacrament and offers saving grace, without any respect to the faith of the recipient, yet it is also true that, in the case of adults, a beneficial result follows only where Baptism is received by faith.

The question: Is a hypocrite, therefore, also regenerated, if he receives Baptism? is answered by Hafenreffer (499): "In such a case we must distinguish between the substance of Baptism and its fruits. For a hypocrite, if he is baptized, receives indeed true Baptism, as to its substance, which consists in the legitimate administration of the Sacrament according to the words of the institution and in the promise of divine grace. But as long as he perseveres in his hypocrisy and infidelity, he is destitute of its salutary fruits and effects, which only believers experience. Therefore, God really offers his grace and the forgiveness of sins to him who is baptized, and desires on his part to preserve that covenant perpetually firm and entire without any change, so that the grace promised in the covenant may always be accessible to him who is baptized, and that he may enjoy it as soon as he repents; but, as long as he remain a hypocrite and impenitent, he is destitute of it."

Quenstedt (IV, 117): "Even to all hypocrites Baptism offers spiritual gifts, as regeneration and whatever is comprehended under it, the gift of faith, remission of sins, etc., ... but some adults, by actual impenitence, hypocrisy, and obstinacy, defraud themselves of the saving efficacy of Baptism; and

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hence, although these gifts be offered to them, they are not actually conferred; yet, in the meantime, it is and remains in itself a salutary instrument and means of regeneration, since the deprival of the first act does not follow from the deprival of the second act through some fault of the subject.”

Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 33): “Faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably this salutary and divine water. For, as this is offered and promised to us in the words together with the water, it cannot be received otherwise than by cordially believing it. Without faith, Baptism profits nothing; although it cannot be denied that in itself it is a heavenly and inestimable treasure.”

From this follows the antithesis against the Romanists, who maintain: “That Baptism confers grace *ex opere operato*; i.e., by virtue of the sacramental action itself, so that faith is excluded by the efficiency of sacramental grace.”

[10]

Baier (686): “That infants are to be baptized, is plain from the testimony of John 3:5, and Mark 10:14, taken together, thus:

1. Whom Christ desires to come to him for salvation, but who cannot attain eternal life in the ordinary way except through the medium of Baptism, upon these Baptism should be conferred, as the ordinary means, and to them it should not be denied. But, Christ desires infants to be saved (Mark 10:14) who cannot attain eternal life in the ordinary way, unless through the medium of Baptism (by virtue of the general assertion, John 3:5); therefore, etc.
2. Whom Christ desires to be brought to himself, that they may enjoy his spiritual blessing, they are to be brought to him by Baptism as the ordinary means. But Christ desires infants to be brought to him, that they may enjoy a spiritual blessing (Mark 10:14); therefore, etc.

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3. The command, Matt. 28:19, to baptize all nations, is properly extended to infants also, who constitute a portion of the nations.
4. The examples which show that whole families were baptized, e.g., Acts 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor. 1:16, are properly believed to embrace infants, who doubtless constituted a part of the families.
5. Add also the analogy of circumcision, which was administered to infants; and,
6. That, as the promise of the covenant of grace, Acts 2:39, belongs to infants, so also does the seal of the covenant, which is Baptism.
7. As the whole Church is cleansed by the washing of water through the Word (Eph. 5:26), this properly refers to infants also, for they too, though unclean by nature, are nevertheless to be ingrafted into the Church."

Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 49): "That the Baptism of infants is pleasing and grateful to Christ is abundantly manifest from what he himself has done, viz., because God has sanctified, and made partakers of the Holy Spirit, many of those who were baptized immediately after their birth. But there are many also, at the present day, of whom we perceive that they have the Holy Spirit, as they give certain proof of this, both in doctrine and life; just as by the grace of God there is granted to us the ability to interpret the Scriptures and know Christ, which every one knows to be impossible without the aid of the Holy Spirit... But if the Baptism of children were not pleasing to Christ, he would not give to any of them the Holy Spirit, nor even a particle of it; and, that I may say in a word what I think, there would not have been among men a single Christian through all the ages that have elapsed until the present day."

The objection of the opponents, viz., "The Sacraments are of no advantage without faith, but infants have no faith," is considered untenable, for faith is taken into the account only in

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the case of adults, who are already capable of being influenced by the Word. Stated generally, however, the proposition, "that the Sacraments are operative only when faith is present" is false, for the Sacrament, as a means of salvation and as the visible Word, is designed, just as the audible Word, to produce faith, and really produces it when there is no hindrance opposed to it on the part of man, which is the case in children.

Baier (690) says: "Infants, on account of their age, cannot put any hindrance in the way of divine grace, or maliciously oppose it, and hence they immediately obtain grace by the use of the constituted and unimpeded means."

Gerhard (IX, 246): "We therefore invert the argument: Infants have no faith, viz., with respect to their corrupt nature, because, on account of their carnal generation from their parents, they are flesh" The Dogmaticians accordingly maintain most positively, upon the authority of Tit. 3:5, that faith is produced in children through Baptism (Gerhard (IX, 246): "Baptism is the washing of regeneration; but regeneration cannot take place without faith), although they confess that they cannot clearly understand what kind of faith this is. Gerhard (IX, 275): "We are not solicitous about the mode of this faith, but we simply acquiesce in the fact that infants really believe."

Chemnitz, Formula 1567, quoted by Gerhard (IX, 273): "When we say that infants believe or have faith, it must not be imagined that infants understand or perceive the movements of faith; but the error of those is rejected who imagine that baptized infants please God and are saved, without any action, within them, of the Holy Spirit, while Christ clearly says: 'Except a man be born,' "etc. "The Holy Spirit also is always given with the remission of sins, nor can any one, without the Holy Spirit, please God, Rom. 8.

Since, therefore, it is certain that baptized infants are members of the Church, and please God, it is also certain that the Holy Spirit is efficacious within them, and, that too, in such a way that they can receive the kingdom of heaven, i.e., the

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grace of God, and the forgiveness of sins. Although we neither understand nor can explain in words of what nature is that action or operation of the Holy Spirit in infants who are baptized, nevertheless, from the Word of God it is certain that this occurs. This action or operation of the Holy Spirit in infants we call faith, and say that infants believe. For the means or instrument, whereby the kingdom of God, offered in the Word and Sacrament, is received, Scripture calls faith, and says that believers receive the kingdom of God.”]....

Quenstedt (IV, 153) calls attention to a difference between the primary and immediate act or operation of justifying faith, “by which it reposes in Christ the Mediator and apprehends his benefits by the operation of the Holy Spirit, and this is the internal and formal faith which we attribute to children; and the secondary and mediate, by which faith is drawn out externally towards our neighbors in acts of charity, which we deny to infants.” ... The objection that infants are incapable of faith, because their reason is not developed, he opposes with the distinction: “between an intelligent and rational soul, and its operation and use. Faith requires an intelligent and rational soul as its subject, and hence faith cannot be excited in brutes, yet this faith does not depend on the operation and use of the same.”

Chemnitz (Loc. c. Th., III, 160): “We by no means grant that infants who are baptized are either without faith or are baptized on the faith of others. The faith of others, indeed, that is of parents or those offering them, leads children to Christ in Baptism, Mark 10:13, and prays that they may be endowed with faith of their own. But there is no doubt that through the washing of water by the Word, Christ operates by his Spirit in children who are baptized, and causes their reception into the kingdom of God, although we do not understand in what manner this is done.

For Baptism is the washing of regeneration and the renewal of the Holy Spirit who is poured out upon those baptized, that,

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being justified, they may become heirs of eternal life, Tit. 3:5; Matt. 10:15, and this is called the faith of infants. For, as the circumcision of children, in the Old Testament, was the seal of the righteousness of faith, so, because in the New Testament baptized infants please God and are saved, they cannot and ought not to be cast out among unbelievers, but are properly reckoned among believers. Though faith comes through hearing in another way, in intelligent, sensible, willing adults, than in infants, not yet having the use of their reason." Baier (690) adds to this: "It is not to be supposed that the actual benefit of regeneration, or the production of faith in infants, is to be deferred to years of discretion, and that they meanwhile are in no way received into grace." Hence Confirmation cannot be considered the completion of infant Baptism.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession (VII, 6) says of it only this: "Confirmation and extreme unction are rites received from the fathers, which, however, the Church never requires as necessary to salvation, because they are not commanded by God."

Chemnitz (Ex. C. Trid., II, 113): "Our theologians have often shown that the rite of confirmation, when the useless, superstitious, and unscriptural traditions respecting it have been laid aside, may be used piously and to the edification of the Church in this way, viz., that those who were baptized in infancy, when they come to years of discretion, should be diligently instructed by a clear and simple setting forth of the doctrines of the Church; and, when they seem moderately grounded in the rudiments, they should be presented before the bishop\* and the church, and then the child, having been baptized in infancy, should first be admonished in a short and simple address concerning his Baptism.... Secondly, The child itself should make a personal and public profession of this doctrine and faith. Thirdly, He should be questioned concerning the principal doctrines of the Christian religion.... Fourthly, He should be reminded and should show by his

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profession that he differs from all heathen [unbelieving] opinions. Fifthly, A serious and solemn exhortation should be added.... Sixthly, Public prayer should be made for these children; ... to which prayer, without superstition, the imposition of hands may be added. Nor would such prayer be fruitless, for it is supported by the promises concerning the gift of perseverance and the grace of confirmation.”

[11]

Baier (690): “Baptism efficaciously contributes to the confirmation of the faith of believers and their further renovation, not only when it is received, but throughout their whole life. (For the covenant of grace, of which Baptism is the seal will continue firm and ratified forever on the part of God.)”

Chemnitz (Examen, Preuss. ed., p.276): “Christ himself affirms that the action of Baptism respects not merely either the past or the present, but he uses the future in Mark 16:16. It is noteworthy how Scripture extends the efficacy of baptism for believers, to all times, present (1 Pet. 3:21), past (Tit. 3:5), and future (Mark 16:16; Eph. 5:26, 27). The purifying and sanctifying virtue, efficacy and operation of Baptism, therefore, according to Scripture, remain and work throughout the entire life of the Christian; as Paul clearly teaches in many words, Rom. 6.

The compact of grace and covenant of peace which God makes in Baptism, is not merely for the past, or for that moment; but it is an eternal covenant, as he says in Is. 54:10. For the covenant was not made upon the condition that if we would fall from it by sin, it should be so broken, that even though we would return to it in true repentance by faith, God would no longer keep it. For see Rom. 3:3; 2 Tim. 2:13, and that most charming description, Jer. 3:1ff. That this comfort is rightly applied to Baptism, is shown by the marriage illustration in Eph. 5. Lest there might still be doubt, Paul recalls the Galatians who had fallen after Baptism, to the promise made in their



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Baptism, Gal. 3:27, as he also did the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 12:13....

Baptism is the solemn seal and perpetual attestation that communion and participation in Christ's blessings are presented and given us if we believe; 'for he that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' But there is true faith not only when in the very action of Baptism, one apprehends the promise of grace, but even when after Baptism he retains it; yea, when after a fall he again in repentance lays hold of it, the faith is true; and what Christ says, remains true, viz., 'He that believes,' etc."

Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 76): "In Baptism, grace, the Spirit, and the power are given to the baptized, to subdue the old man in us, that the new man may come forth and be strengthened. Hence Baptism always remains the same; and, although anyone driven by the storms of sin may fall away from it, yet the way of access to it is always open, that we may again subject the old man under the yoke of repentance. But it is not necessary to be again sprinkled with water; for, if we were immersed in water one hundred times, yet it would be only one Baptism. But the work and the signification continues and is permanent."

Hollaz (1097): "Baptism is of such wonderful efficacy, in consequence of its divine appointment, that God, on his part, in view of the baptismal covenant, recalls the sinner to himself and forgives his offenses, if he be penitent; and the contrite sinner, on his part, panting after the grace of God, can encourage himself by the remembrance of his Baptism."

Hafenreffer (497): "But 'Do we not often sin again after Baptism?' True, but that requires no repetition of Baptism; for God, who, in this ordinance enters into a covenant of grace with us, is unchangeable in his will and promises, and on his part seriously and earnestly desires to preserve it perpetually inviolate, firm, and unbroken; only let us return by repentance to him who in Baptism has promised us grace and forgiveness of sins; and thus, in the newness of life we shall finally enjoy the

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fruits of Baptism, of which we have in the meanwhile been deprived by impenitence.”

At the same time, in repentance man still has the means to appropriate to himself the blessed efficacy of Baptism, of which he has hitherto by his own neglect been deprived; for repentance is nothing else than a continuation or renewal of that which was symbolically indicated in Baptism, namely, crucifying the old man within us, so that in repentance we can recover that which was neglected on man’s part in Baptism. [12] On this ground, also, the repetition of Baptism is as unnecessary as it is inadmissible. [13]

[12]

Luther's Large Catechism (IV, 64): “Finally, we must not omit to mention, or fail to understand, what is signified by Baptism, and why God has commanded this Sacrament, whereby we are first admitted to the Christian communion, to be administered with such external signs and acts. The work, moreover, or act, is, that we who are to be baptized are plunged into water, by which we are covered, and, after having been immersed, we are again drawn forth. These two things, to be plunged into the water and to come out of it again, signify the power and efficacy of Baptism, which are nothing else than the destruction of the old Adam and the resurrection of the new man. These two things are to be unceasingly practiced by us throughout our whole life; so that the Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism, begun indeed once, but continually perpetuated.”

(IV, 74): “From this you see very clearly that Baptism, both by its efficacy and its signification, embraces also the third Sacrament, which they are accustomed to call penance, which really is nothing else than Baptism, or its exercise. For what is penitence, unless it be earnestly to attack the old man, that his lusts may be subdued, and to put on the new man? Wherefore,

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if you are living in penitence, you are living in Baptism, which not only signifies this new life, but also produces it, both beginning and carrying it on." (79): "So that repentance or penitence is nothing else than a return and re-approach to Baptism, that that may again be sought and practiced which before had been begun, but negligently suspended."

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Quenstedt (IV, 117): "Baptism properly administered, is not to be repeated and reiterated: (1) because it is the Sacrament of initiation, for, as we are born but once, so also we are but once born again; (2) because there is no precept, no promise, no example, in Holy Scripture for such repetition; (3) because the fruit of Baptism is perpetual, and the unbelief of man does not make the faith of God of no effect."

Chemnitz (Examen, Preuss, p. 279): "This doctrine concerning the non-repetition of Baptism, has been given not only that we should dispute that it should not be repeated, but that the sources of consolation might be shown so that even after a fall, when again converted, we have reaccess to the covenant of peace, made and sealed unto us in our Baptism.

Finally, Baptism is necessary, because it is commanded by God; but, as God can save us through other means also, we hope that the children of Christian parents who, without their own fault, are prevented from being baptized, will not be lost.

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Gerhard (IX, 282): "(We teach) that Baptism, as the ordinary Sacrament of initiation, and the means of regeneration, is necessary for regeneration and salvation to all without exception, even to the children of believers; yet, meanwhile, that, in case of deprivation or of impossibility, the children of

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Christians may be saved through an extraordinary and peculiar divine dispensation. For the necessity of Baptism is not absolute, but ordinary. On our part, we are bound to receive Baptism; yet an extraordinary act of God is not to be denied in the case of infants brought to Christ by godly parents and the Church through prayer, and dying before the blessing of Baptism could be brought to them, since God will not so bind his grace and saving efficacy to Baptism, but that he is both willing and able to exert the same extraordinarily in case of deprivation.... We neither can, nor ought we rashly to condemn those infants that die either in their mother's womb, or suddenly for any cause before receiving Baptism; we should rather conclude that the prayers of godly parents, or, if the parents in this matter are neglectful, the prayers of the Church, poured out before God for these infants, are mercifully heard, and that they are received into favor and life by God."

Hollaz (1098): "Baptism is necessary, through the necessity of precept and means; through an ordinary and not an absolute necessity; inasmuch as we believe that the children of Christians dying without Baptism are saved."

As Baptism, at the same time, distinguishes us from the great mass of those who do not belong to the Church, and imposes on us the obligation to be faithful to our baptismal covenant, the following may be considered as secondary designs of Baptism: (1) The distinction between Christians and unbelievers, and the union of the former with the Church, 1 Cor. 12:12. (2) The obligation to true faith and a godly life, 1 Pet. 3:21. [15]

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Koenig (244) thus compendiously states the designs of Baptism: "There is a supreme design of Baptism, and an intermediate one. The supreme design is either absolutely supreme, viz., the

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glory of the divine wisdom and goodness; or secondarily supreme, viz., the salvation of souls. The intermediate design is either primary or secondary. The primary, in infants, is the conferring of faith and of covenant grace; in adult believers, the confirmation and sealing of faith and grace; with respect to all kinds of candidates for Baptism, the offer of faith and grace, and the spiritual blessings belonging thereto. The secondary design is (1) the distinguishing of Christians from the assemblies of the Nations[unbeliever]; (2) an admonition of natural depravity; (3) the commemoration of the love of Christ; (4) an exhortation to newness of life.”



## 10. Sacred Meditations

*Johann Gerhard (1582-1637) along with Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz is one of the finest theologians and pastors of our Lutheran Church Fathers. Both his brilliance and piety can be seen in this meditation on baptism.*

### **MEDITATION XVII: THE BENEFITS OF BAPTISM**

**Baptism is a Holy Washing.**

Call to mind, O faithful soul, the wonderful grace of God bestowed upon you in holy baptism. Baptism is the washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5); therefore he who has been spiritually washed in the laver of baptism is no longer held, body and soul, under the power of a carnal nature, but because he has been born again of God, through water and the Spirit (John 3:5) he is a son of God, and if a son then an heir of eternal blessedness (Rom. 8:17). As the Eternal Father, at the baptism of Christ, declared, "This is my beloved Son" (Matt. 3:17), so all who believe and are baptized receive the adoption of sons. As the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove, at Christ's baptism, so He is also present at our baptism and gives it all its efficacy; nay, more, communicates Himself to believing souls in this holy ordinance, and so works in them that "they become wise as serpents and harmless as doves" (Matt. 10:16).

As it was at the creation, so is it at our regeneration. For as at the creation of the world, the Spirit of the Lord moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1:2), and imparted to them a vital energy, so in the water of baptism the same Holy Spirit is present to render it efficacious for our regeneration. Our beloved Savior, Christ Himself, submitted to baptism that He might make it plain that through baptism we are to be made members of His body.

Often a remedy is applied to the head so that other parts of the body may be healed; our spiritual head is Christ, and He submitted to holy baptism that the members of His mystical body might enjoy its saving benefits. Under the old economy God entered into covenant with His people by circumcision (Gen. 17:11); so in the new economy we are received into covenant relations with God by baptism (Col. 2:11, 12), because baptism has superseded circumcision. Let not him who is in covenant with God fear the devil. Those who are baptized into Christ put on Christ (Gal. 3:27), and thus the saints are said to have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. 7:14). The perfect righteousness of Christ is the glorious robe of His saints; let not him therefore who is clothed in this robe fear the least spot of sin.

There was at Jerusalem, by the sheep market, a pool (John 5:2) into which at certain times an angel went down and troubled the water; whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in, was made whole of whatever disease he had (John 5:4). The water of baptism is that pool, which heals us of the malady of sin, when the Holy Spirit descends into it and troubles it, as it were, with the blood of Christ, who gave Himself as a sacrifice for us, just as the sacrificial lambs were



washed in that pool at Jerusalem. At Christ's baptism the heavens were opened (Matt. 3:16); so at our baptism the gates of heaven are opened to our souls. At the baptism of Christ all three persons of the adorable Trinity were present; so they are at our baptism. And so in that word of promise, which is united to the element of water, faith receives the grace of the heavenly Father who adopts us, the merit of the blessed Son who cleanses us from sin, and the efficacious working of the Holy Spirit who regenerates us.

Pharaoh and all his hosts perished in the Red Sea, while the Israelites passed over safely (Ex. 14:28); thus in baptism all our sins are destroyed, and the believing soul passes safely over to the promised inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. Baptism may be likened to that sea of glass like unto crystal which St. John saw in his wonderful vision (Rev. 4:6); through it as through a glass the glory of the Son of Righteousness shines into our souls; but that sea was before the throne of the Lamb. That throne of the Lamb is the Church, in which alone the grace of baptism is deposited.

The prophet Ezekiel in his vision saw waters issuing from under the temple (Ezek. 47:1) which carried life and healing to all things (Ezek. 47:9); so in God's spiritual temple, the Church, the saving waters of baptism are still streaming forth, into whose depths our sins are cast (Micah 7:19), and whose streams bring spiritual healing and life unto all to whom they come. Baptism is that spiritual flood in which our sinful flesh is drowned: the foul raven, the devil departs, not to return, but the dove, the Holy Spirit, returns with the olive leaf, that is, with peace and quietness, to the weary soul. Call to mind, therefore, O faithful soul, this wonderful peace offered to thee in baptism, and for it give due thanks to God.

Moreover, the more richly blessed the baptismal grace bestowed upon you, the more carefully you should guard it. "We are buried with Christ by baptism unto death; that just as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 5:4). We have been made whole, therefore let us sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto us (John 6:14). We have put on the righteousness of Christ, a garment of inexpressible preciousness; therefore let us not defile it with sin. Our old man was crucified and put to death in baptism; let the new man now live. We have been regenerated and renewed in the spirit of our mind in baptism (Eph. 4:23); let not the flesh then rule the spirit! "Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17), let not then the oldness of the flesh prevail over the newness of the Spirit. We have become the sons of God by our new spiritual birth; let us live worthily, therefore, of our Heavenly Father. We have become temples of the Holy Spirit; let us therefore prepare an abode that will be pleasing to such an honored Guest. We have been taken into covenant relation with God; let us take heed therefore that we do not serve the devil, and so deprive ourselves of the grace of this covenant.

O most blessed Trinity, accomplish all this in our souls, we humbly pray! O, One only God, who has bestowed Your grace upon us in baptism, help us, we beseech You, to persevere in that grace unto the end.

# 11. A Sermon on the Baptism of Jesus (Matthew 3:13-17)

*Martin Luther composed this sermon on the baptism of Jesus for his household. It was published in the House Postils. This text is taken from volume 1 of the House Postils published in English in 1884.*

Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him: Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered Him. And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and, lo, a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:13-17)

We have already learned, my hearers, how the Festival of the Epiphany derived its name from the manifestation of Christ, not only by the star, but also by His baptism in the Jordan. And since this latter manifestation is by far the most important and comforting, it would not be amiss if we would call this day the Festival of the Baptism of Christ and of His manifestation in the Jordan when He was thirty years of age.

The Evangelist relates this occurrence with much care. We are told that Christ, who thus far had lived in retirement, not yet having entered upon His office, departed from Galilee, coming to the Jordan unto John to be baptized, as did the sinners who confessed their sins and desired forgiveness. At this, John was greatly astonished, deeming himself unworthy to baptize Christ. But Jesus said: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness"; that is: If poor sinners are to be made righteous and to be saved, thou must baptize me. I became a sinner in behalf of all sinners, and must therefore do what God demands of them so that they may be made righteous through me.

The Son of God, who had no sin, was baptized and did what He was not obliged to do, for our consolation and as an example for us. We indeed, poor, miserable and corrupt as we are, not only neglect to do what we ought to do but are even guilty of open rebellion against God; and to speak of any work of supererogation, on our part, is sheer nonsense. Let us then bear in mind this fact that Christ, the Son of God, who instituted holy Baptism, was Himself baptized and enjoins that the ordinance of Baptism be retained in the Church, and that all who desire to be saved shall be baptized.

Surely, those who do not appreciate the occurrence in our text, but despise Baptism or speak of it in an unbecoming manner, must be accursed people whom the devil has polluted and blinded. Why should you hesitate to have yourself or your children baptized, if even the Son of God was baptized? Why should you be so proud, yea, so blind and foolish, as to despise this holy and saving ordinance?

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Even if Baptism were useless and would benefit us nothing, ought we not to be ready, nevertheless, to be baptized from mere reverence for the Son of God, who also was baptized? Besides this, we learn from the occurrence before us what the benefits of Baptism are. We see how God in heaven manifests His mercy at the Baptism of His Son. The heavens, firmly closed before, now open, as the Evangelist relates, and an aperture is formed through which we can look in and see how, henceforth, there is no barrier between God and us. He, God the Father Himself, is present and says: "This is my beloved Son," etc. Tell me, is not this a most glorious revelation and a sure sign that God is pleased with Baptism, which His beloved Son sanctified with His own body, and that He is present in it?

If we wish to keep a festival of the manifestation of Christ, why should it not be this manifestation, in which God reveals Himself so potently as Father, Son, and Holy Ghost? Yea, God the Holy Ghost is also present, and that too in a pleasing shape, as an innocent little dove, which is the gentlest of all birds, without malice and bitterness. This is a token that God will not be angry with us but will rather assist us, through Christ, to become pious and happy.

Here, then, we have a twofold manifestation: First, of God the Father omnipotent and eternal; secondly, of the Holy Spirit. These manifestations occur at the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan, who was baptized for us, not only to give us an example but also to exhibit the mercy of God so that we should have faith in this Baptism and use it, knowing that

God is merciful unto us if we follow this example and are baptized, as Christ has ordained.

The Father, however, does not manifest Himself merely by opening the heavens, but He is also heard speaking from heaven with a voice which ere this no one ever heard, saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Truly, this is a different sound from that heard on Mount Sinai, where God also spoke from heaven, but in such a manner that the earth trembled, and the mountains quaked, and all the people were filled with fear of death.

It is no such awful voice of God that we hear now; He speaks full of love, and grace, and mercy. He says, as it were: Turn hither your eyes, ye sons of men, and see what takes place. You observe that John now baptizes a man in the water of the Jordan, just as he baptizes other persons. If you wish to know what manner of man this is, listen to me: "He is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." You need not be afraid of Him. He stands there naked like other men, without a sword or any temporal power. Nor need you be afraid of me; for I do not now come with thunder, with lightning, nor with the sound of trumpets, as I came on Mount Sinai, but with a friendly token and with an emblem of grace.

All this is done in the most affectionate manner. The Son of God, innocent and wholly without sin, stands in the Jordan and is baptized; the Holy Spirit like a dove comes upon Him in the presence of John, and God the Father speaks with us very affectionately, telling us that He does not send to us an apostle, nor a prophet, nor an angel, but His only Son, in

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whom He is well pleased. By this, we are directed to have all confidence in the Son, for God Himself condescends to announce to us all, at the time of His Baptism, that He is His well-beloved Son, as though He should say: If you desire to have a gracious Father, your wish can now be realized; only cling to my Son whom I love, and I will love you also, for His sake if you hear His voice. Hear Him, therefore, and do His bidding. As to His person He had no need of Baptism, just as little as of circumcision; He is without sin. The Baptism of John I indeed ordained on account of sinners, so that all who would confess their sins, and repent of them, and desire to be freed from them, might come to this Baptism in the sure faith that I would be merciful unto them. Why then is my Son baptized who is no sinner? Not for His own, but for your sake, who are sinners. He took upon Himself your sins, and of these He desires to be freed, so that you might be saved and your sins no longer stand on record against you.

The Evangelist relates all this very beautifully when he says: Christ answered John, who opposed Him, "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness." That is: The righteousness of the whole world depends upon this Baptism. Since I have taken upon me and bear the sins of the world, I must, in order to redeem the world, do what God demands of sinners, namely, to be baptized of thee. Do not, therefore, prevent this labor of love, but as I willingly present myself for Baptism, in behalf of a sinful world, so do thou cheerfully assist and baptize me, that the wrath of God may be appeased and sin subdued. With this, thy Father Everlasting is pleased; He speaks with us from heaven, directing us to His Son in these words: "This is my beloved

Son in whom I am well pleased." This He said for our consolation, that we might appropriate this Baptism and fully believe that the wrath of God is now appeased, that our sin is removed through the Baptism of Christ, and that God will henceforth be merciful unto us for the sake of His Son.

This voice from heaven ought to be listened to with the most profound attention, and this glorious manifestation, in which God opened the heavens and sent down His Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, ought to be treasured up in our hearts and should always be present before our eyes. Yea, we ought ever to hear that gladsome voice: Here you have Him, my Son, my heart, my richest treasure, my all, even myself. And the Son—what of Him? He appears like a poor, needy sinner and comes to be baptized of John in the Jordan. Thus we see God manifesting Himself most graciously and affectionately in a threefold manner, in correspondence with the three persons of the Godhead, and this for the purpose of enabling everyone to understand how God would no longer chide nor be angry with those who would accept Christ as the Lord, relying upon His word and work. God here declares that He will be well pleased with all that the Son desires, says, and does.

O, how happy we would be if we listened to the voice of Christ and would rely upon it with our whole heart! Accursed and miserable people are they who heed not this voice but go on as though it had not spoken. The wretched minions of the pope even blaspheme and rebel against this voice when they assert that the Father is well pleased not only with Christ but also with the monks, the priests, the mass,



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with pilgrimages, and the like. Surely, whoever thinks upon this as he should, would much prefer death to living with such blasphemous and miserable people, who do not honor nor prize the mercy and kindness of God any more than these Papists do.

Therefore, beloved children, heed this voice while you hear it. But a few years ago we knew naught of it; the heavens were closed and we were compelled, by the devil, to hear the monks preach of purgatory, of apparitions, and other lies. Now, thanks be unto God, the pure doctrine is again proclaimed, and we need but to hear it and to heed it. The world will not do this; but we ought, upon this day, to give heartfelt thanks to God for His great kindness, for the manifestation of His heart and treasure, of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, of His Son in Baptism in the Jordan, and of Himself in a voice so glorious and so pleasing.

He who refuses to accept with his whole heart the Son, who stands in the Jordan to be baptized like a sinner, and upon whom the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove, is indeed worthy of damnation; for he refuses to hear the voice of the Father which resounds in his immediate presence. No doubt, a host of holy angels was also there, for where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit manifest themselves, there the heavenly multitude must also be.

Let us, therefore, learn to appreciate highly this festival. The manifestation of Christ to the wise men from the East, by means of a star, is indeed wonderful; but this manifestation is far more important; for these are the true Kings, three in

number, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, manifesting themselves together at the Baptism of Christ. If He had so willed it, this revelation might have occurred in the wilderness or in the temple at Jerusalem, but it was to be at His Baptism, for our instruction, that we should ever prize Baptism, not otherwise than as real and new-created saints.

The blasphemous Anabaptists, at the present day, teach that Baptism is mere water. May the devil take such calumnation! For a dog, or a swine, or a cow, it would be well enough to judge thus, since these have but the taste of water; a Christian, however, will not judge according to the senses but according to the Word. Here is not mere water, but also the word and power of God; as we see at the Baptism of Christ, where God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are present. It is not water alone, but that water in which the Son of God laves, over which the Holy Spirit hovers, and of which God the Father speaks. Baptism is not mere water, but water full of grace and a laver of regeneration, ordained and sanctified of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Accordingly, Christ ordained that Baptism should be administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost.

God the Son, with His Body, God the Holy Ghost with His Presence, and God the Father with His Word sanctify Baptism, and are really present whenever a child is baptized among us. Since, therefore, the entire Godhead is connected with it, Baptism is not mere water and no invention of men; for although man baptizes, he does not do it in his name but

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in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, who are there in the act, otherwise Baptism would be of no avail.

Who dares to despise this ordinance, with which the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost unite? Who would venture to call such water mere water? Do we not plainly see what spices God has thrown into this water? If we mix sugar with water, it is no longer mere water but becomes claret or something similar; why then should we endeavor to separate the Word from the water and say it is mere water, as if neither the Word of God nor He Himself were united with it? Such a supposition is false; God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are in and with the baptismal water, as Christ, at the Jordan, was in the water, the Holy Ghost over it, and God the Father revealing Himself in the voice from heaven.

Baptism is therefore a peculiar water that taketh away death and every evil, helping us into heaven and to a life everlasting. It is a precious, sweet water, full of aroma, a healing power, for God is united with it. God is a God of life, and therefore this water which He has blessed must be the true aqua vim, which conquers death and hell and brings eternal life.

It behooves us, indeed, to learn the importance of baptism and to value it highly. We do not baptize in the name of an angel or of a human being, but in the name of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; or, as it is expressed in the Acts of the Apostles, in the name of Jesus, which is the same. Whoever confesses Jesus Christ must also confess God the Father and the Holy Ghost, for Christ distinctly says that He proceedeth

from the Father and that He will send the Holy Spirit. If we then in truth confess Christ, we will also believe that the Son exists not alone but in communion with the Father and the Holy Ghost, though the Father and the Holy Spirit may not be mentioned by name.

We must, therefore, be exceedingly careful not to separate in Holy Baptism the Word from the water with which we baptize, but we must confess and believe that God so instituted this ordinance that, for Christ's sake, we are thereby, through the Holy Ghost, cleansed from our sins and rescued from eternal death. Or why else should the Holy Trinity be present with it? If we then firmly believe that our little children are born in sin, let us be quick to baptize them, that God may accomplish His work in them, according to His declaration that we must be born again of water and the Spirit and that he who believes and is baptized shall be saved. If we know our infants to be under the dominion of death, let us not be slow to wash them, according to the command of Christ, in this bath of Baptism, that death may be overcome.

And you, my hearer, who are baptized, remember well that your Baptism is unto you a seal and guarantee of the forgiveness of your sins and of the promise of eternal life through Christ. Yes, Baptism has a divine power to destroy death and to purify from sin; wherefore we are baptized with such hope into the death of Christ.

Baptism with its blessings and promises remains efficacious, though we may have fallen into sin and guilt, if we return from our error and do not continue in our wickedness. It will

## Baptism Hymns

never do to seek forgiveness of sins and yet persistently to abide in them; we must repent and in true faith say: My Lord God has assured me of all mercy, when I was baptized in the Baptism of His Son, and now I will turn back to this grace of God, being convinced that my sins are removed, not, indeed, for my own sake or that of any other creature, but solely for Christ's sake, who has instituted and ordained Baptism and who was Himself baptized, as though He had been a sinner.

Tell me, my hearers, is not this manifestation far more glorious than that of the star in the East? The latter was enjoyed by only a few heathens, whilst of the former all Christians are partakers. Therefore this festival ought to be known as that of the Baptism of Christ; then we would have an appropriate occasion to preach of the Sacrament of Holy Baptism against all sectarians and against the devil, who allows us, right willingly, the enjoyment of all things, except of the treasure which has real value for us, of which he is ever busy to deprive us, as he successfully did in the Church of the pope, in which nothing, or but very little, of this manifestation in the Jordan was ever preached.

Learn well, then, and heed with care that upon this day God manifested Himself with a glorious declaration concerning His Son, which assures us that whatever He says or does in regard to us, or we in regard to Him, shall be pleasing unto the Father. Whoever is obedient unto the Son and keeps His Word will be a beloved child of God and will have the Holy Spirit, who also manifested Himself at this Baptism in so beautiful, cheering, and pleasing a manner. The voice of the Father also is heard speaking in the most winsome way: Here

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I give unto you not an angel, nor a prophet, nor an apostle, but My own Son and Myself. Could God have manifested Himself in any other way more gloriously? And how could we serve Him better and please Him more than by accepting His Son, our Savior, whom we ought to hear and obey?

They who will not listen to Christ unto salvation fully deserve to follow the apostles of the devil unto eternal damnation. May God bestow upon us the grace of faith in Christ and retain us in the same unto life everlasting! Amen.

## 12. Baptism Hymns

*We have included several hymns because one of the greatest ways to take to heart sound teaching is to sing it. Tunes for these hymns can easily be found online.*

### **He That Believes and Is Baptized**

1. He that believes and is baptized  
Shall see the Lord's salvation;  
Baptized into the death of Christ,  
He is a new creation.  
Thro' Christ's redemption he shall stand  
Among the glorious heav'nly band  
Of ev'ry tribe and nation.

2. With one accord, O God, we pray:  
Grant us Thy Holy Spirit;  
Look Thou on our infirmity  
Thro' Jesus' blood and merit.  
Grant us to grow in grace each day  
That by this Sacrament we may  
Eternal life inherit. Amen.

*Thomas Kingo, 1689*

## Baptized into Thy Name Most Holy

1. Baptized into Thy name most holy,  
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
I claim a place, though weak and lowly,  
Among Thy seed, Thy chosen host.  
Buried with Christ and dead to sin,  
Thy Spirit now shall live within.

2. My loving Father, Thou dost take me  
To be henceforth Thy child and heir;  
My faithful Savior, Thou dost make me  
The fruit of all Thy sorrows share;  
Thou, Holy Ghost, wilt comfort me  
When darkest clouds around I see.

3. And I have vowed to love and fear Thee  
And to obey Thee, Lord, alone;  
Because the Holy Ghost did move me,  
I dared to pledge myself Thine own,  
Renouncing sin to keep the faith  
And war with evil unto death.

4. My faithful God, Thou failest never,  
Thy cov'nant surely will abide;  
Oh, cast me not away forever  
Should I transgress it on my side!  
Tho' I have oft my soul defiled,  
Do Thou forgive, restore, Thy child.



## Baptism Hymns

5. Yea, all I am and love most dearly  
I offer now, O Lord, to Thee.  
Oh, let me make my vows sincerely  
And help me Thine own child to be!  
Let naught within me, naught I own,  
Serve any will but Thine alone.

6. And never let my purpose falter,  
O Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,  
But keep me faithful to Thine altar  
Till Thou shalt call me from my post.  
So unto Thee I live and die  
And praise Thee evermore on high. Amen.

*Johann J. Rambach, ~1734*

## **To Jordan Came our Lord, the Christ**

1. To Jordan came our Lord, the Christ,  
To do God's pleasure willing,  
And there was by St. John baptized,  
All righteousness fulfilling;  
There did He consecrate a bath  
To wash away transgression,  
And quench the bitterness of death  
By His own blood and passion,  
He would a new life give us.

2. So hear ye all, and well perceive  
What God doth call a Baptism,  
And what a Christian should believe  
Who error shuns and schism:  
That we should water use, the Lord  
Declareth it His pleasure,  
Not simple water, but the Word  
And Spirit without measure;--  
He is the true Baptizer.

3. To show us this, He has His word  
With signs and symbols given;  
On Jordan's banks was plainly heard  
The Father's voice from heaven:  
"This is My well-beloved Son,  
In whom My soul delighteth;  
Hear Him!" Yea, hear Him, every one,  
When He Himself inviteth;  
Hear and obey His teaching!

4. In tender manhood God the Son  
In Jordan's water standeth;  
The Holy Spirit from heaven's throne  
In dove-like form descendeth;  
That thus the truth be not denied,  
Nor should our faith e'er waver,  
That the Three Persons all preside  
At Baptism's holy laver,  
And dwell with the believer.

## Baptism Hymns

5. Thus Jesus His disciples sent  
Go, teach ye every nation,  
That, lost in sin, they must repent,  
And flee from condemnation;  
He that believes and is baptized  
Shall thereby have salvation,  
A new-born man he is in Christ,  
From death free and damnation,  
He shall inherit heaven.

6. Who in this mercy has not faith  
Nor aught therein discerneth,  
Is yet in sin, condemned to death  
And fire that ever burneth;  
His holiness avails him not,  
Nor aught which he is doing;  
His inborn sin brings all to naught,  
And maketh sure his ruin;  
Himself he cannot succor.

7. The eye of sense alone is dim,  
And nothing sees but water;  
Faith sees Christ Jesus, and in Him  
The Lamb ordained for slaughter;  
It sees the cleansing fountain, red  
With the dear blood of Jesus,  
Which from the sins, inherited  
From fallen Adam, frees us,  
And from our own misdoings.

*Martin Luther, 1541*