"Susan K. Wood's ecumenical study of our 'one Baptism' merits wide attention from systematic, historical, and liturgical theologians. Baptism and Eschatology, Baptism and Justification, Baptism and Church are just some of the topics that this liturgically grounded and readable study treats with clarity and precision. A veteran of Roman Catholic–Lutheran dialogues, Susan Wood does here what many of us have been calling on theologians to do for some time, i.e., to root soteriology and ecclesiology in God's gracious gift of new life in water and the Holy Spirit in the font of grace where all new life begins so that a baptismal ecclesiology might be generated."

— Maxwell E. Johnson
University of Notre Dame

"*One Baptism: Ecumenical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Baptism* represents a mature study of the historical, ecclesiological, sacramental, and doctrinal dimensions of Baptism as they have been stated over the centuries by the Churches. Sr. Susan Wood has helped us along the path to full visible unity by offering a rigorous and careful study of the important questions concerning the meaning of Baptism as the foundation of the unity of the Church."

— James F. Puglisi, SA
Director, Centro Pro Unione, Rome
Professor of Sacraments, Ecclesiology, and Ecumenism
Pont. Athenaeum S. Anselmo and
Pont. University of St. Thomas Aquinas, Rome

One Baptism

Ecumenical Dimensions of the Doctrine of Baptism

Susan K. Wood

A Michael Glazier Book

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There is one body and one Spirit,

just as you were called to be the one hope of your calling,

one Lord, one faith, one baptism,

one God and Father of all,

who is above all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

Contents

Abbreviations

DS	Denzinger-Schönmetzer
DV	*Dei Verbum*
JDDJ	*Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*
JSNTSup	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, Supplement Series
LBW	*The Lutheran Book of Worship*
LC	*The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*
LC-MS	Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod
LG	*Lumen Gentium*
MPL	Migne's *Patrologia Latina*
NPNF	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*
PL	*Patrologia Latina*
RCIA	Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults
SC	*Sacrosanctum Concilium*
ST	St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*
TI	Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*
UR	*Unitatis Redintegratio*
WELS	Lutheran Church-Wisconsin Synod
Werke	*D. Martin Luthers Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1912–21)

Introduction

The question "What does baptism do?" has haunted me for much of my theological career. At one level any catechized Christian can answer this question, yet from the perspective of systematic theology, the answer remains elusive and complex. The reason is that baptism, the sacrament that makes Christians, lies at the intersection of all the great themes of theology: Christology, pneumatology, salvation, faith, church, justification, and Christian discipleship. Yet the medieval concern to determine the minimum elements necessary for sacramental validity and efficacy barely touches many of these themes. Conversely, the systematic and dogmatic treatment of such themes often does not allude to baptism. This is partially due to the fragmentation of theology today. Even though today sacramental theology is more in tune with liturgical theology, both need stronger bonds with systematic theology. This study attempts to forge those bonds by integrating sacramental, liturgical, historical, and systematic theology in an examination of baptism.

Christian churches claim baptism as the foundation of their unity, citing Ephesians 4:4: "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." It is rather commonplace to assert that baptism constitutes the source of ecumenical unity of the Christian churches, but all too often this assumption remains unexamined. When our practice of baptism is different and what we say baptism does is different, can we really claim that there is one baptism? This is a study that relies on a number of theological disciplines to determine how common our doctrine and practices of baptism are.

This project examines baptism through an ecumenical lens. The discerning reader will discover that perhaps more attention is given to Lutheran sources than to some other ecclesial traditions. That is due to

the fact that I have been engaged in ecumenical dialogue with Lutherans since 1994 and am simply more familiar with this tradition. At times, to manage the complexity of the ecumenical variety I group ecclesial traditions into "families" that share certain common characteristics. While this generalization is helpful, I acknowledge that at times it obscures details of difference with respect to individual ecclesial groups. Even within these groups ecumenical documents and even confessional statements do not necessarily represent all the members. Nevertheless, I believe this synthetic approach helpfully sketches the large contours of the ecumenical landscape. Although I try to accurately describe all the traditions represented in this study, it is written from a Roman Catholic perspective. This fact simply represents the hermeneutical truth that we ask questions and see the world from our own front yard.

These are some of the questions that drive this project:

Chapter 1: Baptism, Eschatology, and Salvation

- How can we reconcile the two dominant paradigms for the sacrament of baptism: Christ's baptism in the Jordan, with its trinitarian theophany, and the theme of death and resurrection in Romans 6? The first paradigm is dominant in Eastern traditions while the second is a major theme in Western traditions.
- Baptism seems to be about beginnings, yet it is oriented to the eschaton. How does eschatology illuminate the initiation achieved in baptism? The Scriptures affirm the necessity of baptism for salvation, yet Roman Catholics have a long history of affirming the possibility of salvation for non-Christians, the nonbaptized. How can these two affirmations, the necessity of baptism and the salvation of non-Christians, be reconciled? Is baptism really necessary for salvation? What is at stake? How is Christian baptism related to the salvation of non-Christians?

Chapters 2 and 3: The Doctrine of Baptism

- When Christians cite Ephesians 4:4-6, saying there is one baptism, what is common in our doctrine of baptism and where do we differ? How do different traditions answer the question "What does baptism do?"
- What have been some of the misrepresentations of sacramental teaching contributing to ecumenical disagreements?

- Does eschatology or forensic justification shape Luther's theology of baptism?

Chapters 4 and 5: Baptism and Patterns of Initiation

- The World Council of Churches has suggested that ecumenical agreement on baptism may be reached through common patterns of initiation. How fruitful is this approach, and what is the relationship between patterns of initiation and the doctrine of baptism? Do the baptismal liturgical texts of various traditions reflect their doctrine?
- What are the theologies of baptism imbedded in the ancient catechumenate?
- What really constitutes the difference between traditions reflecting the ancient catechumenate and those that restrict the practice of baptism to the ordinance given in Matthew 28:19?

Chapter 6: Baptism, Faith, and Justification

- Baptism is a sacrament of faith, both requiring faith for a fruitful reception of the sacrament and imparting the infused theological virtue of faith. The requirement of faith is what leads some churches to limit baptism to believers. Yet all churches, including the paedobaptists, require faith for baptism. This raises the question of the role of the community of faith in the baptismal event and how that relates to personal confessions of faith. Are we initiated into a faith community or do we come to faith individually and then seek out persons who also believe to form a faith community?
- How is baptism as a sacrament of justification related to justification by faith? Why were Roman Catholics out of communion with Reformation churches for 480 years on the issue of justification, while differences in the doctrine and practice of baptism were not considered to be church dividing in many instances? Where these differences were church dividing, this was more from the perspective of other traditions than from the side of the Roman Catholic Church.

Chapter 7: Baptism and the Church

- How is a tradition's understanding of baptism profoundly linked to its view of the church? How do different traditions come to different

conclusions on baptism because of their different understanding of the nature and boundaries of the Christian community and how that community is constituted? What is the relationship between baptism and church membership?

I hope that this study contributes to a clearer understanding of what we mean when we say that baptism is the foundation of unity among Christian churches. May it also lead to a deeper integration of doctrine and sacramental practice in the church, or at least a better awareness of how they are interrelated. Finally, may its modest proposals contribute to Christian unity.

* * *

I am grateful to Marquette University for granting me the sabbatical and two summer fellowships that made this project possible. My religious community, the Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth, enabled me to extend my sabbatical to the entire year, but they sustain me in so many other more important ways. I also owe a debt of thanks to Mickey Mattox, Jakob Rinderknecht, and Katy Leamy, who read parts of the manuscript and commented on them, and to Lisa Cullison who prepared the indexes. Linda Maloney was indefatigable in her copy editing. I deeply value the support and assistance of Peter Dwyer and Hans Christoffersen at the Liturgical Press. Finally, but not least, I have been blessed in the many conversations with my ecumenical dialogue partners. May we one day be gathered in unity around the Lord's table.

Chapter One

Baptism, Eschatology, and Salvation

Baptism seems to be about beginnings: beginning of a new life as a Christian, inauguration into the Christian community, beginning of life in the Spirit. Yet to understand baptism and the beginnings of Christian life we must begin at the end, with eschatology. Baptism is more than initiation into the Christian life, more than the path to entrance into the church. It is oriented toward the end time and is the sacramental realization of that end time proleptically breaking into the life of the baptized individual and the church. In other words, baptism is inaugurated eschatology, the end time present now.[1]

Baptism receives its eschatological identity from Jesus Christ, who from eternity entered human history in the incarnation, uniting the earthly material of the cosmos to divinity, bringing eternal time into the midst of historical time, when he became human. His resurrection, into which we are baptized, represents the intersection of historical time and the fulfilled time of eschatology. Neville Clark observes that this happens not at the end of history but in the midst of history, and comments: "Resurrection, which belonged to the Last Day, had taken place on the Third Day.

[1] Neville Clark, "Initiation and Eschatology," in *Baptism, the New Testament and the Church: Historical and Contemporary Studies in Honour of R.E.O. White*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Anthony R. Cross, JSNTSup 171 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 339.

Tomorrow had become Now. The future Eschaton was the Present Eschatos. Yet historical time went on. And the End was not yet."[2]

We express the same idea sacramentally. Sacraments memorialize the past and anticipate the future within present symbolic events and symbolic time, concentrating past and future within a present event. Within the ritual time of the liturgy, past and future are gathered into the present moment through memorial (anamnesis), presence, and anticipation. A past historical event is transposed into the present life of the community in its remembrance and becomes a promise of future fulfillment and completion. Thus in baptism, when we participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, these past events are brought into the present. When we rise sacramentally to new life with Christ and participate in the new creation, the fullness of that new life and new creation still await us in the eschaton. For example, even though we sacramentally celebrate union with Christ and one another in the Eucharist, as we leave church we are often painfully aware of the broken relationships and global enmity that point to reconciliation still to be achieved. Although we die and rise in Christ in baptism, we must still die in the flesh and await our final bodily resurrection. The sacramental event anticipates the final historical and transhistorical event.

This sacramental view is consistent with the Pauline eschatological view of baptism in Romans 6, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Galatians 6:15, which consider the present experience of Christians as a participation in eschatological reality.[3] The inaugurated aspect of Pauline eschatology consists both in what God has done in the death and resurrection of Jesus and in what happens to a Christian in baptism and how that person lives out the meaning of baptism in daily life. However, there is also a future dimension, the full working out of the power of the resurrection, which remains to be fully accomplished. Thus there is the past event of what Christ did, the present application of that to the life of the Christian, and the future anticipation of fulfillment. Eschatology imparts meaning and value to historical, temporal realities in the light of their ultimate purpose and goal. The dynamism of the Christian life can be summarized as a dying and rising with Christ—not just sacramentally in baptism and the Eucharist or at the end of earthly life, but also in the daily choice to turn from a self-centered, self-affirming preoccupation to an openness of being

[2] Ibid., 342.

[3] Zachary Hayes, *Visions of a Future: A Study of Christian Eschatology*, New Theology Series 8 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1989), 58.

for others and for God. This dynamism answers the question: what do Christians hope for? And it becomes the grammar of how they structure their lives.

This relationship between past, present, and future is possible on account of the risen Christ, for as Thomas J. Talley explains:

> By virtue of the resurrection, Christ is now transhistorical and is available to every moment. We may never speak of the Risen Christ in the historical past. The event of his passion is historical, but the Christ who is risen does not exist back there, but here, and as we live on this moving division line between memory and hope, between the memory of his passion and the hope of his coming again, we stand always in the presence of Christ, who is always present to everyone. This is where the real substance of our anamnesis lies.[4]

At the beginning of the Easter Vigil liturgy the celebrant cuts a cross in the wax of the Easter candle, saying: "Christ yesterday and today, the beginning and the end, Alpha and Omega. All time belongs to him and all the ages; to him be glory and power through every age for ever. Amen." The key to eschatology is Christology. Jesus Christ is the one who has come and entered our history, who comes in the present through word and sacrament, and who will come again. He does not replace or annihilate history, but enters history, just as he becomes flesh rather than merely appearing in the flesh in a docetic fashion. Incarnation and redemption are not two separate events, the bookends of his life, but represent an unbroken continuum. Becoming flesh leads to the grave. Yet, because he has taken to himself the earthly matter of creation, that stuff of the earth is transformed through Christ's resurrection. Creation becomes the new creation.

Christians experience the inauguration of this new creation in the baptismal waters administered in the Triune name. Just as Christ did not bypass the matter of creation in uniting himself to humanity, so too Christians use the waters of baptism to unite themselves to divinity and begin to live the eschatologically transformed life through sacramental mediation. In being baptized, Christians imitate the actions of Christ who announced the coming reign in his own baptism. Christ not only

[4] Cited by Robert Taft in "What Does Liturgy Do? Toward a Soteriology of Liturgical Celebration: Some Theses," *Worship* 66, no. 3 (May 1992): 200.

assumed earthly elements in his incarnation, but submitted himself to John's baptism as a prophetic sign of his messianic identity and mission.

Jesus' Baptism by John: An Eschatological Action

One of the earlier ecumenical documents, "One Lord, One Baptism," situates the eschatological meaning of Christian baptism against the background of John the Baptist's activity.[5] John's baptism, more than a call to repentance or a symbol of purification from sin, is best understood as the proclamation of an eschatological reality: namely, the drawing near of the messianic kingdom. John's baptism had as its purpose the gathering of a messianic people who would be prepared for the coming Messiah. His baptism pointed forward to that event as he cried, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt 3:3). The difference between John's baptism and Christian baptism is that John pointed forward toward the messianic time, while for Christian baptism the messianic kingdom has already come. Baptism admits a person to the kingdom of the Messiah, Christ. The baptism of John is solely a baptism of water; the baptism of the church confers the Holy Spirit, who belongs to the new age and the last days, the messianic time (Isa 11:2; Acts 2:17).

The accounts of Jesus' baptism by John mark the transition from the preparation for the messianic age to its arrival, the seal of Jesus' messianic vocation, and the inauguration of his messianic mission. The puzzle for John was why Jesus should present himself for a baptism of repentance. He had foretold a different baptism:

> I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire. (Matt 3:11-12)

[5] Commission on Faith and Order, World Council of Churches, *One Lord, One Baptism* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1960), 50. I am indebted to this document for the connection between Jesus' messianic vocation and identity and the eschatology presented here. This document was written without Roman Catholic participation because it predated Vatican II and Catholic membership on the Faith and Order Commission.

Here we have reference to the Holy Spirit, associated with the messianic age, and the reference to the final, eschatological judgment. The separation of wheat and chaff symbolizes the eschatological judgment of Matthew 25:31-46, where the Son of Man comes in glory and separates people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. The blessed inherit the kingdom of the Father and are received into eternal life, while the others are sent into eternal punishment.

When Jesus presented himself to John to be baptized, John's response was "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" (Matt 3:14). Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt 3:15). When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens were opened to him. Jesus saw the Spirit of God descend like a dove and alight on him. A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" (Matt 3:17). The appearance of the Spirit and the voice from heaven confirm his being baptized. Jesus' baptism by John is immediately followed by his being led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted, the arrest of John the Baptist, Jesus' proclamation, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near" (Matt 4:17), and his gathering of a messianic community through the call of Simon (now called Peter), Andrew, James, son of Zebedee, and his brother John. In the Gospel of Matthew this is followed by the Sermon on the Mount, which gives the characteristics of the new age that Jesus introduces.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus' public ministry begins with his teaching in the synagogues, including the one in Nazareth where he reads the prophecy of Isaiah:

> The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19)

He ends with the announcement: "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). The prophecy announces the characteristics of the messianic era. Jesus proclaims that this time has arrived, and, in citing the text from Isaiah, gives a clear indication of how his self-interpretation is influenced by the Isaian text.

The theological question raised by Jesus' baptism is why Jesus, the sinless one, must necessarily receive John's baptism of repentance along with all the other sinners. The Commission on Faith and Order locates

the answer in the connection between the voice from heaven proclaiming "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased" and the first line of the first servant song in Isaiah, which says, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations" (Isa 42:1). Both the servant and Jesus receive the pleasure and delight of the Father. Both are recipients of the Spirit in these passages. Both share the mission of restoring justice to the nations. Jesus himself reads Isaiah 61:1-11 in the synagogue in Nazareth, a poem that recalls the Servant Songs of chapters 42–53 in Isaiah, where the mission of the prophet is to bring encouragement to the exiled and oppressed.

The echo of Isaiah in the baptism event invites the reader to interpret the inauguration of the messianic age in Jesus through the lens of the suffering servant in such a way that what is said of the suffering servant applies to Jesus Christ. Thus the Commission concludes that Jesus' baptism with John's baptism of repentance for the remission of sins means that Jesus, the Servant of the Lord, as the only righteous One, enters vicariously into "the sin of the many" (Isa 53:12), to bear it as his own sin so that the many may participate in his righteousness.[6] This is also Paul's interpretation in 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." The Commission summarizes the meaning of the event:

> It is baptism into solidarity with sinners and the initiation of redemptive action, baptism into obedience to the Father and love for the lost, a stepping into the unknown. It was a baptism that brought an opened heaven, revelation from the Father, and the presence of the Spirit. It was also his consecration to suffering and to death. Only so was "all righteousness" fulfilled (Matt. 3.15). The messianic kingdom was established only through the fact that he, "the righteous one, my servant," makes many righteous by bearing their iniquities (Isa. 53.11).[7]

The fourth servant song depicts a man of suffering acquainted with infirmity, wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, upon whom was the punishment that made us whole and by whose bruises we are healed (Isa 53:3, 5). This is the Christian interpretation of Jesus' death. Jesus also interprets his baptism in terms of his death. His

[6] Ibid., 53.
[7] Ibid.

baptism led directly to the cross. When Jesus spoke of baptism on the occasion when James and John, the sons of Zebedee, asked for seats immediately to his right and to his left, he interpreted it in terms of his death: "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized" (Mark 10:39). Here both the cup and the baptism are his death.[8] In Luke 12:50 Jesus exclaims, "I have a baptism with which to be baptized, and what stress I am under until it is completed!"

Just as Jesus' baptism in the Jordan foreshadows his death, Christian baptism is interpreted as a baptism into the death of Jesus. Paul asks, "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?" (Rom 6:3). Baptism is a dying in Christ, a dying that leads to new life. The baptismal font and water symbolize tomb as well as womb, water that drowns as well as water that sustains life.

Death, however, does not have the last word, but is the gateway to resurrection and everlasting life. The text from Romans continues, "Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism unto death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his" (Rom 6:4-5). Jesus' resurrection constitutes the ground of hope and faith in the resurrection of Christians. The new life inaugurated by baptism is not only a different quality of life in this world, but the foretaste of life everlasting.

In the Gospel of John the promise attached to faith-filled sacramental action is eschatological life. Jesus tells Nicodemus, "no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and the Spirit" (John 3:5). In the conversation with Nicodemus faith is associated with eternal life (John 3:16-17). In this same conversation Jesus says that the Son of Man must be lifted up, a reference to the cross, in order that whoever believes in him may have eternal life (John 3:15, 36). In chapter 6, the discourse on the bread of life, the work of God is believing the one whom God sent (John 6:29). Those who believe are promised eternal life and resurrection on the last day (John 6:40), and those who eat the living bread, the flesh of Christ given for the life of the world, receive the same promise (John 6:51, 54). Although not all traditions interpret these texts sacramentally, the sacramental realism of these eucharistic texts is underscored by the

[8] See the reference to death as cup in Mark 14:36.

anti-docetic emphasis on the realism of the Greek verb used for "eating," which carries the connotation of masticating, and the use of "flesh" rather than "body." Faith and sacrament are not a dichotomy in these texts, since the sacramental birth in water and the Spirit and sharing in the bread of life are actions performed in faith.

At times there may be a tendency to read the account of Jesus' baptism in the Jordan, the dominant baptismal text in Orthodox Christianity, separately from the Romans text, the dominant Western text, as two different theologies of baptism. However, the resonances of the Servant Songs in the baptismal event in the Jordan and the Isaiah text inaugurating Jesus' public mission link the two theologies. In the Jordan event and the beginning of his public mission that follows it Jesus proclaims the arrival of the messianic era and appropriates to himself the identity of the servant who inaugurates the messianic time. He then acts on this identity in such activities as reinterpreting the laws of the Sabbath, healing the sick, and forgiving sinners. Jesus' baptismal identity directly leads to his mission, which results in his death.

The end of the journey, however, is not the cross, but rather Jesus' resurrection and exaltation. The theme of exaltation is yet another link to the suffering servant song in Isaiah 52:13: "See, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." Likewise, the same themes occur in connection with Jesus' death in Philippians 2:7-11, where Christ took the form of a slave, became obedient to the point of death on a cross, and was consequently exalted and confessed as Lord.

The Christian's participation in Jesus' death in baptism is also a participation in his resurrection (Rom 6:5). In Paul's theology the ethical dimension of baptism, that is, death to sin, correlates with the eschatological dimensions of baptism, namely the destruction of death itself and the possibility of life everlasting. The newness of life of the baptized is a foretaste of the resurrected life. Having died with Christ, we hope to rise with him. Baptism orients us to a future that does not end in death even while it initiates us into a cruciform pattern of life. This was Christ's path to the resurrection, and thus it is also ours.

Baptism into the Ecclesial Body of Christ

Baptism into Christ is also baptism into his ecclesial body. We do not simply become members of a church as an organization, but are engrafted

into Christ. This reality is expressed according to the various biblical images such as that of the body in 1 Corinthians 12:13 or the relationship of branches grafted into the vine in John 15. These images express not only the relationship of the baptized to Christ, but also that of the baptized to one another. We are members of the same body, vines of the same plant. Thus baptism is incorporation or engrafting into a spiritual community identified by its relationship to Christ.

Just as death is no longer the boundary of individual human existence, neither is it the boundary of this spiritual community. Baptism, like the Eucharist, has an eschatological end and a goal inseparable from the eschatological meaning of the church, which is the eschatological destiny of all believers. The unity forged at the baptismal font and around the eucharistic table extends beyond the frontiers of death. Eschatology is not a break from the previous order, but its completion. The community initiated in baptism is the form of salvation in the end time. Even though each person is saved personally, we are not saved individually, but as members of the people of God.

We call this community the communion of saints and profess belief in it in the third article of the Apostles' Creed, which summarizes the eschatological work and hope of baptism:

> I believe in the Holy Spirit,
> the holy Catholic Church
> the communion of saints,
> the forgiveness of sins,
> the resurrection of the body,
> and the life everlasting.

Here the church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting are all the work of the Spirit. Within sacramental theology these are also the work of the Spirit as received in baptism and the work of the Spirit as operative in the Eucharist. In the invocation of the Spirit in the Eucharist, the epiclesis, the Spirit is not only invoked to transform the gifts of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ; in a second epiclesis the Spirit is invoked to transform the community of believers into the ecclesial body of Christ. Through baptism we are incorporated into Christ and the church. Through the Eucharist, by partaking of one bread, we become one body (1 Cor 10:17) through the power of the Spirit. Thus these two foundational sacraments are properly sacraments of the church in the strong

sense of constituting the church as the body of Christ and temple of the Spirit.

Baptism and Salvation

Salvation is a theme appropriately considered within eschatology, since it is eternal life in communion with God who is Father, Son, and Spirit. Many Christian churches teach the necessity of baptism for salvation.[9] A number of interconnected theological terms refer to the core Christian conviction that because of Christ human beings experience a transition from one state to another, which designates a changed status before God. The first state is characterized as one of sinfulness, bondage, and alienation from God. The second is described as graced union with God that endures after death in eternal life. Thus redemption, based on an economic metaphor, literally means that Jesus buys us back. Atonement literally means at-one-ment, the uniting of parties formerly estranged. Reconciliation has much the same meaning. Justification, a term at home in the forensic world of law, means that we are made and declared righteous before God. Salvation, derived from the Latin word for health, refers to healing and the fact that human woundedness is made whole. All these concepts refer to an initiative taken by Christ on our behalf.

Baptism is necessary for salvation because of the relationship it establishes with the trinitarian life through the work of Christ in the power of the Spirit. In baptism we are incorporated into Christ and thus share in his life of grace and in his saving death and resurrection. We are also anointed by the Spirit, and in Christ we receive the status of adopted sons and daughters of God and brothers and sisters of Christ. Incorporation into Christ is inseparable from incorporation into the church, Christ's ecclesial body. The church is the community of salvation that mediates the saving effects of Christ's redemptive actions through its confession of faith, proclamation of the word of Scripture, and the sacraments.

The Scriptures use various phrases to express the baptized person's relationship to Christ. The baptized is assigned to Christ by being baptized in the name of Jesus (1 Cor 1:13; 3:23; 6:19; 2 Cor 10:17). The baptized puts on Christ like a garment (Gal 3:27; Eph 4:22-24; 6:11-14; Col 2:12;

[9] The differences among various Christian traditions will be discussed in chapters 2 and 3.

3:9-10; Rom 13:13-14). More than an external likeness to Christ, the image of putting on Christ signifies that the baptized person becomes the image and likeness of Christ and thus manifests Christ. Through baptism there is a mutual indwelling of the baptized in Christ and Christ in the baptized (Rom 8:9-11; 2 Cor 4:5-14; 13:2-5; Eph 3:16-17; Gal 2:19-20; 4:19-20; Col 1:17; Phil 1:21). Christ lives through his Spirit in the baptized, enabling them to live a justified life modeled on Christ and exhibiting the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. This life freed from the power of sin is characterized by faith, hope, and charity. The baptized person shares in salvation because, in being united with Christ, the baptized lives Christ's justified life.

Before baptism is something an individual does or even what the church does to an individual, it is ultimately the work of Christ ministered through the agency of the church. When the church baptizes, Christ baptizes. What God has already done in Jesus, his being anointed with the Spirit and being proclaimed "beloved," is accomplished in the individual through the Spirit:

> But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:4-7)

However, the Christian is baptized not only in the name of Jesus, but also in the name of the Father and of the Spirit (Matt 28:19), indicating that baptismal identity, as Christ's identity, is constituted by the trinitarian relationships. The baptized person begins a journey to the Father with whom he or she is reconciled by participating in the salvific work of the Son in the power of the Spirit.

The baptismal life is a foretaste of eternal life, a participation in the trinitarian life that is the goal and fulfillment of the Christian life. This is literally a new life, a rebirth. The supernatural is the proper goal of the natural, even while lying beyond its capabilities. The history of salvation reveals the true meaning of human history. Thus baptism is oriented to the future. As Michael Schmaus expresses it: "Like the whole Church, baptism exists only for the sake of this future. It is the future that gives it its ultimate meaning. All the effects of baptism, accordingly,

are to be seen as a liberation from the obstacles on the way and as the granting of freedom of movement toward the future."[10]

The eschatological meaning of baptism, like that of the Eucharist, points to salvation as a social reality. The second sentence in chapter 2 of *Lumen Gentium* makes the remarkable claim: "He (God) has, however, willed to make women and men holy and to save them, not as individuals without any bond between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness."[11] According to chapter 2 this people is comprised of those elected by Christ's covenant. This new people of God, called together from Jews and Gentiles, is reborn of water and the Spirit, a reference to baptism (John 3:5-6). Its destiny is the kingdom of God, which will be brought to perfection at the end of time. This messianic people, even though it does not include everyone at the present time, is "a most certain seed of unity, hope and salvation for the whole human race" (LG 9). The people, compared to a "seed" because of its limited yet promising scope, is "the instrument for the salvation of all." This people of God is also called the church of Christ, identified as "the visible sacrament of this saving unity." Finally, this people is also a "kingdom of priests" that offers spiritual sacrifices, another reference to baptism since this priesthood of believers is constituted in baptism. These sacrifices include the sacrifice of a holy life, the offering of the Eucharist, prayer, and the reception of the sacraments (LG 10).

Although baptism is oriented to salvation and many churches teach that it is necessary for salvation, salvation is not to be presumed. Although Christ promises eternal life to those who believe in him (John 6:41) and eat his flesh (John 6:51), and entrance into the kingdom of God is associated with birth of water and the Spirit (John 3:5), human beings possess the freedom to reject God's offer of salvation. The Council of Trent taught that the justified baptized person can sin and lose grace.[12] Salvation is not automatic with baptism, but presupposes perseverance in faith, hope, and charity with the help of God. Thus we are only assured of our salvation at the moment of death. A Reformed statement expresses this condition aptly:

[10] Michael Schmaus, *Dogma 5: The Church as Sacrament* (Kansas City, MO: Sheed and Ward, 1975), 160.

[11] LG 9. In *Vatican Council II: The Basic Sixteen Documents*, trans. Austin Flannery (Northport, NY: Costello, 1996).

[12] Council of Trent, Session VI, 13 January 1547, canon 23; Session VII, 3 March 1547, canon 6.

> While the promises of Christ in Baptism are such that none need ever fall into despair, the obligations involved in Baptism are such that none dare become complacent regarding his state of salvation. He may quench the Holy Spirit: he may become hardened in sin: he may reject the gift of life. Therefore what is given may become a judgment: what is grafted may wither: what is generated may never grow.[13]

The Salvation of Non-Christians

The Roman Catholic tradition affirms the necessity of baptism for salvation; at the same time it teaches the possibility of salvation for non-Christians. The theological challenge is to show how the salvation of non-Christians is related to baptism. In the second chapter of *Lumen Gentium*, even though covenant and election are the identifiers of the community, salvation is not limited to the people of the covenant but extends potentially to the whole human race.[14] The messianic people, described as a tiny flock, although it does not include everybody, nevertheless has a role of constituting "for the whole human race a most certain seed of unity, hope, and salvation" (LG 9). In fact, not only the whole human race but all creation is destined for eschatological renewal and will participate in the final freedom of the glory of the sons and daughters of God (Rom 8:21). The larger question is not the salvation of the few, those included in the covenant, or even those who profess explicit faith and are baptized. The issue is how non-Christians and even all of creation are related to the seed community that represents explicit, visible profession of faith, conversion of life, and participation in baptism.

The church, then, as a visible sacrament of this saving unity, has a role in the saving unity that potentially can encompass all. As a sort of sacrament, it signifies intimate union with God and the unity of all humanity (LG 1).[15] It is also an instrument facilitating this unity. *Lumen Gentium* suggests several ways in which the church may effect this unity, including

[13] Church of Scotland, Special Commission on Baptism, *The Doctrine of Baptism: An Interpretation of the Biblical and Reformed Doctrine of Baptism* (Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1962), 15.

[14] See LG 16 for how those who have not accepted the Gospel are yet related to the people of God in various ways.

[15] Note that the church is "a sort of" (*veluti*) sacrament. Thus it is a sacrament analogously, not the same way Christ or baptism and the Eucharist are sacraments.

baptism, the law of love, the fact that the church has a single head, a single status of dignity and freedom, a single law, and a single end or purpose (LG 9). This is clear enough insofar as the unity of the church itself is concerned, or insofar as the church itself becomes more extensive through evangelization and the addition of new members. Nevertheless, it remains somewhat unsatisfactory as an explanation of how those peoples who explicitly do not want to be Christians can possibly be considered to be associated with the church in some way.

Various attempts to account for the salvation of non-Christians include the traditional teaching about three kinds of baptism: baptism of water, martyrdom (which is baptism by blood), and baptism by desire. Theologians have interpreted decisions of conscience, a form of the traditional baptism of desire, as representing an implicit faith sufficient for salvation. Karl Rahner built on this in formulating his well-known theory of the anonymous Christian.[16] Admittedly, all these accounts of the salvation of non-Christians only make sense from an intramural perspective, that is, from the Christian perspective of Christians looking outward and trying to account for an inclusive and universalist eschatology and soteriology. They can become quite offensive to the Muslim or Hindu who has no desire to be a Christian, anonymous or otherwise. Yet *Lumen Gentium* clearly taught the possibility of salvation for non-Christians: "Those who, through no fault of their own, do not know the Gospel of Christ or his church, but who nevertheless seek God with a sincere heart, and moved by grace, try in their actions to do his will as they know it through the dictates of their conscience—these too may attain eternal salvation" (LG 16).

Nevertheless, eschatological reconciliation has a universal dimension, not in the sense that all will necessarily be saved, but that all receive the offer of salvation that must be accepted in freedom. Although Christians have the firstfruits of the Spirit, the whole creation, presumably including those who do not know Christ, is groaning to be set free from its bondage to decay—in other words, from the sentence of death—in order to obtain the glory of the children of God: in other words, life eternal (Rom 8:21). If this salvation is to occur beyond the frontiers of the bap-

[16] Karl Rahner, "Anonymous Christians," in his *Theological Investigations*, vol. 6 (Baltimore: Helicon Press, 1969), 390–98; "Observations on the Problem of the 'Anonymous Christian,'" *Theological Investigations*, vol. 14 (New York: Seabury Press, 1976), 280–94; "Anonymous and Explicit Faith," *Theological Investigations*, vol. 16 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1979), 52–59.

tized, it will be through the power of the Spirit (Rom 8:14), and because they, too, are called, predestined, and justified and members in some way in the family of Christ (Rom 8:29-30).

The document issued by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church," interprets this possibility of salvation for non-Christians in relation to Christ and the church:

> For those who are not formally and visibly members of the Church, "salvation in Christ is accessible by virtue of a grace which, while having a mysterious relationship to the Church, does not make them formally part of the church, but enlightens them in a way which is accommodated to their spiritual and material situation. This grace comes from Christ; it is the result of his sacrifice and is communicated by the Holy Spirit; it has a relationship with the Church, which "according to the plan of the Father, has her origin in the mission of the Son and the Holy Spirit."[17]

The precise manner in which the non-Christian is related to Christ and the church remains mysterious. However, any position that would consider the church as one way of salvation alongside those constituted by the other religions, seen as complementary or substantially equivalent to the church, even if converging with the church toward the eschatological kingdom of God, is expressly rejected in the document.[18] At the same time it acknowledges that "the various religious traditions contain and offer religious elements which come from God, and which are part of what the Spirit brings about in human hearts and in the history of peoples, in cultures, and religions."[19]

Even though theologians have not been able to explain the manner of salvation of non-Christians in a completely satisfactory way, either to Christians or especially to non-Christians, the fact of this possibility of salvation; the relationship of this salvation to the God whom Christians confess as Father, Son, and Spirit; and the necessary relationship to the church as the body of Christ and the sacrament of the unity of God and humankind is profoundly related to the idea of unicity and universality.

[17] Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, "Dominus Iesus: On the Unicity and Salvific Universality of Jesus Christ and the Church," August 6, 2000, §20. Text available in *Origins* 30, no. 14 (September 14, 2000), 209, 211–19.

[18] "Dominus Iesus," §21.

[19] Ibid.

Salvation reflects our unity as members of the one human race; the recapitulation of that race in Christ, the new Adam; and our interconnectedness with one another and with Christ through the bonds established by the Spirit expressed in various images of the church such as the mystical body of Christ, people of God, or temple of the Spirit. The very fact that even though each is saved personally (but not individually) but as a people implies that the salvation of non-Christians is because of a relationship to the church, even though there appears to be no connection institutionally and non-Christians are not a formal part of the church. The "elements that come from God" and the work of the Spirit in human hearts, history, and cultures, which motivate to seek and desire God through their decisions of conscience and search for the divine, result in what has been traditionally termed "a desire for baptism" even though it is not a conscious desire for the sacramental water bath in the Triune name. Christians have identified that longing as a desire for baptism, but when this is not an explicit desire, this "desire for baptism" becomes a shorthand way of saying that the object of our longing is that holy, good, ultimate personal presence that gives meaning to our living and dying, our loving and failed relationships, our struggles, hopes, joys even in the face of immense personal and global tragedies. Christians know this to be the paschal mystery of Christ's death and rising, the Christ who was sent to reconcile all with the Father in the power of the Spirit. Baptism is insertion into this Triune life and mystery; into the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit; and into the process of dying and rising in the company of all so initiated. Nevertheless, the church has never required that non-Christians be able to identify the object of that holy longing explicitly in order to name it a "desire for baptism."

Baptismal Life

Eschatology, which articulates the goal of baptism, establishes the pattern of Christian living for the initiated who is "on the way." Once we know where we are going, the contours of the road leading to that destination become clear. Baptism is the beginning of a spiritual growth to maturity and a journey to final consummation.

The baptismal life reflects analogically the inner life of the Triune God and thus is characterized by communion and relationships of interdependence. In baptism we enter into communion with God, who is communion of Father, Son, and Spirit. Moreover, a Christian does not go to

God individualistically, but in the company of the community of the baptized, whose bond is the communion of the Spirit by which this community becomes the body of Christ. Baptism not only takes place within the fellowship of the church or grants membership to the church as to an organization; baptism places a person within the corporate union of the faithful in Christ in the communion of the Spirit. This community, variously described as the body of Christ and the temple of the Spirit, is a primary agent in the Christian formation of the baptized, the place where Christian life is nourished so that it may grow to maturity. Within this communion, the baptized is invited to abandon illusions of self-sufficiency and isolation and live a life poured out for others in the spirit of self-emptying that characterizes the Triune relationships. The baptismal life, however, is not only characterized by generosity; it is also profound receptivity and so is never empty, but is filled to overflowing with the love of the Triune God, the gifts of the Spirit, and the shared life of Christians.

Baptismal life is cruciform in the pattern of Christ's redemption, lived at the intersection of a "vertical" relationship with God and a "horizontal" communion with one another. The "vertical" life of contemplation and "horizontal" service complement one another. Baptismal life is also cruciform in the taking up of one's cross and the laying down of one's life in small as well as larger ways in imitation of Christ's death. Our baptism is completed by going the way of the cross.[20] As the cross is not the end of the road, neither is death, but resurrection to new life, new creation, and new birth.

Monika Hellwig describes the countercultural implications of Jesus' death and resurrection: a radical sharing of material resources (Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37); a style of leadership characterized by service rather than domination (John 13:6-17); trust in divine providence (Matt 6:25-34); forgiveness and nonviolence (Rom 12:1-21); simplicity, total truthfulness, and a deep level of fellowship (1 Cor 12:4-31); and a style of life permeated by prayer.[21] This reordering of relationships characterizes the commitment to a baptismal life and represents the advent of the reign of God. While ultimate salvation transcends whatever we can achieve, even

[20] The Report of the Anglican-Reformed International Commission 1981–1984, *God's Reign and Our Unity* (London: SPCK; Edinburgh: Saint Andrews Press, 1984), 34.

[21] Monika K. Hellwig, "Eschatology," in *Systematic Theology: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, vol. 2, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza and John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 361.

by grace, in this world, the sacramental life and the manner of living it requires proleptically realize in a partial way the reign of God, which will be complete eschatologically. In this respect there is continuity between the political, economic, and social structures that result from baptismal living and ultimate salvation, despite the radical discontinuity between this world and the next.

Baptismal life is fundamentally communal. The general judgment as described in Matthew 25:31-46 demonstrates the essential interrelatedness and community of destiny of humankind. The reward of the kingdom is based on how members of the human family treat one another. The fact that there is a general judgment in addition to an individual judgment means that redemption is not offered to each individual person in isolation. A communal destiny awaits each of us, a destiny to which each has contributed for good or for ill.

The themes of baptism, *parousia*, and mutual life come together in the first epistle of Peter. Some scholars interpret 1 Peter 1:3–4:ll as a baptismal homily or liturgy. This letter describes the Christian community as "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people (1 Pet 2:9). First Peter 4:7-11 combines the themes of the *parousia* and the Christian life. "The end of all things is near (v. 7)," and Christians are urged to maintain constant love for one another (v. 8) and to serve one another with whatever gift each has received (v. 10). The baptismal life is a life of mutual service oriented to the end time.

Lumen Gentium develops the themes of 1 Peter in its second chapter on the people of God. As *Lumen Gentium* 9 says, "[God] has, however, willed to make women and men holy and to save them, not as individuals without any bond between them, but rather to make them into a people who might acknowledge him and serve him in holiness." Christians are forged into this people of God by baptism, born anew through the word of God (1 Pet 1:23) and through water and the Holy Spirit (John 3:5-6). This people is "one and unique," spread throughout the world, but destined to be "finally gathered together as one (see John 11:52)" (LG 13). The unity of the people of God entails ethical implications for mutual service and also prefigures the unity of final consummation.

One final characteristic of baptismal life in the pattern of the Trinity is that it is oriented to mission. The missionary character of baptism flows out of Word and Spirit, the two missions of the Trinity. The Father sent the Son to give the Spirit. Jesus' baptism inaugurated his mission. Anointed with the Spirit at his baptism, Jesus was tried in the wilderness and then returned to Galilee proclaiming the advent of the kingdom of

God (Mark 1:9-15; Luke 3:21–4:14). The characteristics of this kingdom, the transformation of the world achieved in the person of Jesus, Son of the Father and empowered by the Spirit, were foretold by Isaiah 61:1-2 and announced by Jesus (Luke 4:18-19): good news brought to the poor, captives released, the blind given sight, and the oppressed freed. Similarly, the Christian conformed to Christ in baptism and anointed by the Spirit is sent to build the kingdom of God, to continue Christ's mission while manifesting the love of Father, Son, and Spirit and thus to transform the world.