

BAPTISM INTO CHRIST IN THE  
THEOLOGY OF GALATIANS

by

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Baptism into Christ is most generally regarded as a reference to the Christian ordinance of baptism. The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the validity and appropriateness of a metaphorical use of βαπτίζω in the expression in Galatians 3:27 and then to understand its significance in Paul's discussion in the context of Galatians.

The Galatian Epistle was written by Paul, directed to the inhabitants of the southern part of the Galatian province, and penned around A.D. 48-49 on the eve of the Jerusalem Council. It argues for the believers' adult standing "in Christ" and freedom from the law as a modus operandi.

A word study of βαπτίζω demonstrates that a metaphorical use is quite normal. βαπτίζω is used in this metaphorical sense in Galatians 3:27. A contextual exegesis of Galatians 3:27 reveals that baptism into Christ is a forensic transference effected by God, placing believers in the position of being "in Christ." With varying emphases the same essential concept is taught in Romans 6:1-4, Colossians 2:12, and Ephesians 4:4.

This view has several theological implications. Since this transference is the basis of sonship, which in turn is the basis of inheritance, both Old and New Testament saints must participate. This author's suggestion is that the participation of Old Testament saints was effected in connection with the removal of Paradise to the third heaven. Furthermore, a clear distinction must be maintained between this transference, which is forensic, and the Spirit baptism of 1 Corinthians 12:13, which the author believes is experiential.

It is this author's conclusion that baptism into Christ is a soteriological truth based on the redemptive work of Christ and in which all saved must participate. Therefore, while baptism into Christ could not occur historically until the redemptive work was completed, it does have trans-dispensational relevance effecting the soteriological unity of all God's redeemed.

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## INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Pauline theology plays a crucial role in the effort to formulate an exegetically-based systematic theology of the Bible. His own writings verify his claim to a special stewardship of the grace of God to make known the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:2-4). Involved in this mystery is the dispensational shift from a Judaistic to an ethnologically unlimited redemptive program. His writings also demonstrate that a major misunderstanding of this shift was prevalent in the early church.

This misunderstanding continues today, exhibited in several varying, or even antagonistic approaches to the problem. The major purpose of this thesis is to demonstrate that a proper understanding of the Pauline doctrine of baptism into Christ offers crucial answers to this problem.

The doctrine will be studied in the context of the Epistle to the Galatians, so that the overall teaching of that epistle will become relevant to this one aspect. Therefore, in the development of the thesis, some space will be allotted to a consideration of several introductory problems as well as a summary of the argument. A study of baptism and an analysis of the language, grammar, and context

of Galatians 3:27 will comprise a major part of the paper. Observations will then be made on relevant passages in the Pauline literature, followed by an application of the conclusions concerning baptism into Christ to several pertinent theological issues.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EPISTLE OF GALATIANS AND ITS ARGUMENT

Known by Martin Luther as his "wife" and "sweet-heart"<sup>1</sup> and by believers of all ages as the Christian "emancipation proclamation," in a vigorous and explicit manner the book of Galatians explains the liberty possessed by the man who is in Christ. It contains the essence and heartbeat of Pauline theology. For a comprehensive understanding of the relevance of baptism into Christ to the wider context of Galatians, several preliminary issues need to be understood. These include important introductory elements as well as a survey of the argument of the epistle.

#### Introductory Elements

Within the discipline of higher or historical criticism the book of Galatians has seldom suffered any major negative attacks. There are, however, several minor introductory problems that need to be briefly examined to establish and maintain the continuity between the historical and

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<sup>1</sup>"Epistola ad Galatas ist meine Epistola, der ich mich vertraut habe, mein Kethe von Bora," in the Weimar ed., II, 437, quoted by Philip Schaff, History of the Christian Church, Vol. VII, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), p. 141, n. 2.

theological elements of Paul's epistle, the second of which is the major thrust of this paper.

#### Authorship

The internal evidence of the text of the epistle and the external attestation from the early history of the church admits of no conclusion other than Pauline authorship.<sup>1</sup> Historically all groups have accepted the epistle as Pauline including the critical Tübingen school of the previous century, which held to the veracity of Galatians but the errancy of Acts in view of certain apparent contradictions between the two. There was a radical Dutch school which, on the basis of these supposed contradictions, reversed the verdict of the Tübingen school and rejected Galatians as authentic instead of the book of Acts.<sup>2</sup> Today, however, Galatians stands as authentic in the eyes of even the most radical scholars.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Henry Clarence Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943), pp. 212-13.

<sup>2</sup>William Hendricksen, Exposition of Galatians, in New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1968), p. 20. Hendricksen cites F. C. Bauer of the former school and Bruno Bauer, followed by Loman, Pierson, Naber, and Van Manen, of the latter.

<sup>3</sup>Donald Guthrie, New Testament Introduction (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 1970), p. 468.

### Recipients

One of the burning questions among students of Galatians concerns the identification of its recipients. There are two possibilities, the "northern" or "territorial" theory, as opposed to the "southern" or "provincial" theory.<sup>1</sup> The problem revolves around the sense in which Paul is using the appellation "Galatians." If used ethnologically, it refers to the northern area of central Asia Minor, settled by the barbarous Celts<sup>2</sup> who had migrated there from Central Europe in the third century B.C.<sup>3</sup> The territory on which they finally settled formerly had been part of Phrygia, and they moved in as overlords of the indigenous Phrygians, adopting their religion and culture, but not their language.<sup>4</sup> The northern view, therefore, regards Paul as writing to a group of people comprised of the descendants of these immigrants.

With the growth in Roman power politically and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Werner Georg Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, trans. by Howard Clark Kee (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975), p. 296, who insists on the second descriptive term in each case.

<sup>2</sup>"The Greek word Γαλάται is a variant form of Κέλτοι, Celts [Latin Galli]," F. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems, 2. North or South Galatians?" (hereinafter referred to as "North or South Galatians?"), Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 52:2 (Spring, 1971), 243.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. F. E. Peters, The Harvest of Hellenism (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), pp. 156-58.

<sup>4</sup>Bruce, "North or South Galatians?" 243-44.

militarily in the following centuries, Asia Minor, including the Galatians' kingdom, came under her power.<sup>1</sup> In the year 25 B.C. Augustus "reorganized the kingdom as an imperial province, governed by a Legatus pro praetore."<sup>2</sup> The geographical limits of the kingdom by this time, however, had been enlarged to include parts of Phrygia, Lycaonia, and Pamphylia. Therefore, the province of Galatia in the south, while not necessarily comprised of ethnological Galatians, did contain peoples known politically as Galatians. These latter peoples are regarded in the southern view as recipients of Galatians.

The northern theory has found general acceptance traditionally. Its greatest advocate has been Bishop Lightfoot,<sup>3</sup> but even contemporary scholars such as Kümmel reject the southern view, the latter on the basis that the inhabitants of Lycaonia and Pisidia are never called Galatians in extra-biblical literature.<sup>4</sup>

The southern view, held by the majority of modern

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. William M. Ramsay, A Historical Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (hereinafter referred to as Galatians) (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1900), pp. 53-127, for an extended discussion of this very complicated period.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce, "North or South Galatians?" 243-44.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph Barber Lightfoot, Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (hereinafter referred to as Galatians) (London: MacMillan Co., Ltd., 1921), pp. 18-20.

<sup>4</sup>Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 298.

scholars, was established on a reasonable basis by William M. Ramsey.<sup>1</sup> "He based his case . . . on the facts of historical geography, coupled with his interpretation of Paul's policy as one of concentration on the main roads and centres of communication in the Roman Province."<sup>2</sup> For example, since none of the main lines of travel from Syria to the Black Sea or the Aegean ran through ethnic Galatia, the south Galatian view was far more likely. In view of the political divisions in Asia Minor in the first century, Ramsey regarded phrases such as those found in Acts 16:6 (τὴν Φρυγίαν καὶ Γαλατικὴν χώραν) and Acts 18:23 (τὴν Γαλατικὴν χώραν καὶ Φρυγίαν) as references to the southern extensions of the Galatian province, including those parts of Phrygia and Lycaonia lying within this province.

Other arguments for the two views have been arrayed against each other, many from silence, while others are simply invalid.<sup>3</sup> Besides the relevance of the historical geography, other substantial supports for the southern view include: the close correspondence between the Acts account of Paul's visits to southern Galatia and the book of Galatians, the strange silence in Acts of any missionary

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Ramsay, Galatians, pp. 180-234.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce, "North or South Galatians?" 253.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Guthrie, New Testament Introduction, pp. 450ff., for a list of opposing viewpoints.

activity in northern Galatia, the fact that Paul usually used provincial names rather than ethnic names for a people, and the necessity of referring to peoples of the province as Galatians, since no other term would have applied to all of them. All these arguments are reversed and used to favor the northern view but the weight of evidence strongly favors the southern view.

#### Occasion and Date

There is a strong connection between the question of the recipients of the epistle and its occasion and date. The immediate occasion of the epistle is easily discerned. Someone had injected a Judaistic legalism into the doctrinal structure of the Galatian churches that insisted on circumcision as well as other requirements of the Mosaic law as at least a partial basis for both salvation and sanctification (cf. Gal. 1:9; 3:1; 5:7; 5:12). Paul's response upon hearing about this attack by the enemy is this vigorously polemical epistle.

The chronological development of these circumstances is far more difficult to determine. It is dependent on both the North-South view discussed above and the identification of the Jerusalem visit described in Galatians 2. It is often assumed on the basis of the word *πρότερον* in Galatians 4:13 that two visits transpired before the writing of the epistle. Though *πρότερον* does not necessarily denote more

than one visit, its use in the context would be unnecessary if only one visit was implied.<sup>1</sup>

If the northern view is held, the time could not be before the third missionary journey, since only on the second and third journeys would Paul have preached in this area (Acts 16:6 and 18:23).<sup>2</sup> In view of the apparent quickness with which the heresy had taken hold (Gal. 1:6 ταχέως), the writing is usually considered to be from Ephesus on the third journey, or from Macedonia, a place inaccessible to northern Galatia (Gal. 4:20). The affinity between Galatians, Romans, and 1 and 2 Corinthians, the last three of which were definitely written while on the third missionary journey, is substantial enough to sway some authors such as Thiessen who holds to the southern hypothesis to this chronological view.<sup>3</sup> On this basis the date

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (hereinafter referred to as Lexicon) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 729; see also Everett F. Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 274; John Arthur Thomas Robinson, Redating the New Testament (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 56; F. F. Bruce, "Galatian Problems, 4. The Date of the Epistle" (hereinafter referred to as "Date"), Bulletin of the John Rylands Library, 54:2 (Spring, 1972), 251-52.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce, "Date," 251.

<sup>3</sup>Thiessen, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 218; cf. also Robinson, Redating the New Testament, p. 57, who accepts the southern view but regards it as written between 2 Cor. and Rom., probably from Macedonia, ca. A.D. 56.

would be between A.D. 53-56.

On the other hand if the southern hypothesis is accepted, the epistle could have been written earlier. One could assume that the two visits connoted by πρότερον (Gal. 4:13) were fulfilled on the first missionary journey, since Paul did visit several of the cities in South Galatia twice (Acts 14:21). On this basis, the writing could have been any time after the first journey. However, other factors serve as more substantial evidence than this assumption.

The chronological reconstruction of the events surrounding the writing of Galatians, upon which the date of its writing is based, depends totally on the identification of the Jerusalem visit in Galatians 2. The two possibilities include the Acts 15 Jerusalem Council and the Acts 11 famine relief visit. In support of the Acts 15 visit are the similarities in circumstances, including the mention of both Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15:2; Gal. 2:1), the presence of strong opposition (Acts 15:5; Gal. 2:4-5), and the consultation with the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:6; Gal. 2:9).

While these factors seem very conclusive, there are certain rebuttals such as the use of ἔπειτα (Gal. 2:1), which imply only two visits from the context. According to Acts, these would include the visits of Acts 9:26 and 11:30, not Acts 15. Also, there are definite differences in the descriptions of the Acts 15 and Galatians 2 visits. The first is formal and public, the second is private. There

are no decrees mentioned in Galatians, while the existence of the Acts 15 decree would have been compelling material for Paul's argument. Also, Peter would have been far less likely to equivocate after Acts 15 than before.

The Galatians 2 visit is held by the majority of scholars as identical with the Acts 15 meeting.<sup>1</sup> In order to correlate the number of visits in Galatians (only two) with those of Acts and yet maintain the Galatians 2-Acts 15 identity, Kümmel, following the earlier Tübingen school, simply denies the historical accuracy of Luke with regard to the Acts 11:30-12:25 visit.<sup>2</sup>

While this identification has been held traditionally, there is a significant trend to identify it as the famine relief visit. Several arguments make this latter position quite convincing. On the basis of the veracity of the Lucan and Pauline records, there are only two visits mentioned in Galatians, which correspond with Luke's account in Acts 9:26 and Acts 11:27-12:25. That Paul is referring strictly to the second visit in Galatians 2 is emphasized by the use of ἔπειτα in Galatians 2:1, indicating a "succession

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 303; Harrison, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 278; Lightfoot, Galatians, pp. 123-28; Robinson, Redating the New Testament, pp. 37-38.

<sup>2</sup>Kümmel, Introduction to the New Testament, p. 303.

in numerations"<sup>1</sup> and the tone of the preceding passage, in which Paul is emphasizing his contacts with Jerusalem leaders. If another visit must be read into Galatians 1, Paul's argument would lose much of its impact.<sup>2</sup> In addition to these textual arguments, those refutations noted above against the Acts 15 indentivity support the earlier visit.

Assuming the accuracy of this identification, the dating of Galatians would obviously be before the Jerusalem Council of A.D. 48-49. Since agitators are referred to in Acts 15:1 and Galatians 2:12, and since both precipitated dramatic events, including the Jerusalem Council and the rebuking of Peter and writing of Galatians, and since both carried the same heretical message, the reconstruction of the events and therefore the date of the epistle to Galatians is possible.

The agitators are both of the same Judaistic group emanating from Jerusalem and spreading their message to the Gentile churches established by Paul and the other early missionaries. At approximately the same time Paul, while living in Antioch, received word concerning the plight of the Galatians and had occasion to publicly rebuke Peter. The time of writing Galatians was therefore just prior to

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<sup>1</sup>Arndt and Gingerich, Lexicon, p. 284, though they categorize it differently.

<sup>2</sup>Ramsay, Galatians, p. 302.

the Jerusalem Council, possibly while still in Antioch or while enroute to Jerusalem. This would make Galatians Paul's earliest epistle, written in approximately A.D. 48-49.<sup>1</sup>

### The Argument of Galatians

There is significance in regarding Galatians as the earliest of Paul's epistles, since there is a tendency from an anti-revelational standpoint to discern substantial theological growth and development in Paul's understanding of the Christian message. Yet, as Bruce has pointed out:

We must bear in mind the relatively brief interval of time between Paul's earliest letters and those of the Roman captivity--not much, if at all, more than twelve years. . . . Most of the letters would have been written when Paul was in his fifties. He had experienced one revolutionary conversion in (probably) his early thirties; from then on the main features of his belief were sufficiently stable to make it no surprising thing to find him repeating them at an interval of several years when an appropriate occasion arose.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, even though Galatians is Paul's earliest epistle, the theological concepts found therein are as mature and final as those, for instance, discovered in Romans. The differences between these two books are simply circumstantial.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Bruce, "Date," 266; Homer A. Kent, Jr., The Freedom of God's Sons (Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1976), p. 22.

<sup>2</sup>Bruce, "Date," 256.

### The Two-Fold Apostasy

Galatians is a polemical epistle, as strong as any of Paul's correspondence. To justify this kind of literary pugilism something very grave and important must have been at stake. Lightfoot notes an alarming two-fold apostasy evident from the epistle in the churches of the Galatians, both of which are closely related.<sup>1</sup> The first was a denial of Paul's apostolic authority, while secondly, the gospel of God's grace was being attacked by an insistence on the extension of the Mosaic law over the Gentiles and their adherence to it both for salvation and sanctification.

The entire epistle can be divided into two corresponding sections: the first, Galatians 1:1-2:21, establishing Paul's absolute independence from man and direct revelation and commission from God; the second, Gal. 3:1-6:18, setting forth doctrinal, historical, and practical elements in defense of a salvation and Christian life completely by grace through faith. The second section is usually divided into two parts, Galatians 3:1-4:31 and 5:1-6:18. The latter emphasizes the ethical and practical application of the preceding doctrinal argument.

### The Development of the Argument

In the first section Paul vigorously defends his own apostolic authority, on the basis of which the veracity of

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<sup>1</sup>Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 63.

his gospel of grace rests. It is obvious that if the messenger's integrity is questioned, his message is also open to doubt. Therefore the ambassadors of the legalistic heresy had cleverly attacked Paul's apostolic authority. Because of this attack Paul traces his own biography from his involvement in Palestinian Judaism<sup>1</sup> and persecution of the church; his conversion and experience of a direct revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:15-16); his social interaction and geographical movement (1:17-2:10); to the time of the public rebuke of Peter for his oscillation between grace and legalism (Gal. 2:11-21).

Throughout this section his argument revolves around his independence from all human agents and direct revelation from and call and commission by God. The argument is clinched by his public rebuke of Peter in Syrian Antioch. Paul's message is absolutely true; it came directly from God; it is in harmony with the Jerusalem gospel; and it is summarized in Galatians 2:15-21, the message of justification by faith in Christ and not by works of the law.

The second section, especially in chapters three and four, is extremely important in the understanding of soteriological and dispensational truth, especially the distinctives and unity of the latter. Impressed by the weight of the

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Richard N. Longenecker, Paul, Apostle of Liberty (hereinafter referred to as Paul) (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1964), pp. 21-64, for an excellent discussion of Paul's relationship to Judaism.

argument, Findlay writes, "Paul has written nothing more masterly. The breadth and subtlety of his reason, his grasp of the spiritual realities underlying the facts of history, are conspicuously manifest in these paragraphs, despite the extreme difficulty and obscurity of certain sentences."<sup>1</sup>

Paul appeals first of all to the Galatians' personal salvation experience to demonstrate the dependence of salvation on faith and not on works (Gal. 3:1-5). The argument immediately shifts to the Old Testament and the person of Abraham for scriptural support (cf. Rom. 4). Some of the issues being raised by the advocates of the Mosaic law are discernible through Paul's argument. Since only those who keep the Mosaic law were sons of Abraham and under God's blessing of salvation, if a Gentile wanted to be in God's redemptive program, he had to become a proselyte to Judaism.

In response Paul counters with two major arguments. First, works of the law have never made an Israelite a true spiritual son of Abraham (Gal. 3:6-7). Secondly, the Abrahamic Covenant had originally promised that God would direct this blessing not only to believing Israelites, but also believing Gentiles (Gal. 3:8-9). The first argument is developed in Galatians 3:10-14. It is fully consonant with Old Testament teaching that blessing is based on faith and

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<sup>1</sup>George Gillanders Findlay, The Epistle to the Galatians, in The Expositors Bible (New York: A. C. Armstrong, 1898), p. 197.

that law-works, never being perfect, can only bring a curse.

In Galatians 3:15-4:8 Paul develops the central issue behind his teaching. He demonstrates the centrality of the Abrahamic Covenant in the redemptive program and that its culmination and fulfillment are in Christ and all those joined to Christ by baptism into Christ (Gal. 3:16, 19, 27-29). The natural questions and objection in the Jewish mind relate to the Mosaic law. Since Israel in God's program historically has been under the Mosaic law, why is it that believing Gentiles do not also have to come under this institution to be in that program? Paul's answer is that the law was temporary, designed by God as an instructing, revealing, and condemning instrument to prompt men to believe in the divine provision for redemption (Gal. 3:22ff).

The period of time during which the Mosaic law was in effect is regarded as the minority stage for God's people. With the arrival of the seed of Abraham, for whom the promises were ultimately intended, a work of redemption is accomplished, liberating those who were under the law and ending the minority stage in the redemptive plan. Now believers are in the majority stage; they are no longer under the custody of the law; they are placed as mature sons in the salvation program; and because they are sons they receive the Spirit of sonship. The transition from the minority to the majority stage is based entirely on the

redemptive work on the cross (cf. Gal. 3:13, 4:5; Eph. 2:14-16).

This redemption from the law and its curse, the adoption, and the possession of the Spirit of Christ all argue for the absolute freedom or liberty<sup>1</sup> of the post-crucifixion people of God. It is this which Paul seeks to apply to the minds of the Galatians in a very personal and emotional way in Galatians 4:8-31 and in an ethical way in chapters five and six. The essence of his plea in the last section is summarized in Galatians 5:5 and 6:14-15. Christ, His cross work, the new position of the believer in Christ, the Spirit's ministry, and the functioning on a faith basis are all-important to Paul. These are the crucial elements of the gospel of God's grace which Paul so vigorously defends and clarifies in his epistle to the Galatians.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Longenecker, Paul, pp. 157-58, for the Hebrew concept of liberty as centering in God.

## CHAPTER II

### THE MEANING AND USAGE OF BAPTIZEIN

In the very heart of Paul's historical and theological argument concerning the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic law, the concept of baptism into Christ enters the discussion (Gal. 3:27). Without a proper understanding of this doctrine the entire passage will never be understood accurately. The starting point in the exegesis of the verse must begin with the significance of the word βαπτίζειν in this context. While the majority of Pauline scholars assume that Paul is referring to the ordinance of water baptism, it can be demonstrated from the usage of the verb both biblically and extra-biblically that the word is often used metaphorically and though Paul does use the verb in reference to the Christian ordinance, he also uses it in a metaphorical sense.

#### The βαπτω Word Group

The root form of the verb, βαπτω, consistently carries the idea of dipping. Liddell and Scott, from examples in classical Greek literature, give usages such as "to dip, dip under, to dip in dye, to fill by dipping,"

or, intransitively, "dipped, sank."<sup>1</sup> An example of the transitive use is seen in Homer's The Odyssey: "ὥς δ' ὅτ' ἀνὴρ χαλκεὺς πέλεκον μέγαν ἦε σκέπαρνον εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῷ βάπτῃ μεγάλα ἰάχοντα φαρμάσσων" ("And as when a smith dips a great axe or an adze in cold water amid loud hissing to temper it").<sup>2</sup> It is used intransitively by Euripides in "Orestes": "καὶ ναῦς γὰρ ἐνταθεῖσα πρὸς βίαν ποδι ἔβαψεν, ἔσθῃ δ' αὖθις, ἣν χαλᾷ πόδα" ("A ship, if one have strained the main sheet taut, dips deep; but rights again, the main sheet eased").<sup>3</sup>

In the Septuagint and the New Testament it usually carries the same meaning, a dipping or at least staining of one thing with another, and in reference to physical objects.<sup>4</sup> For example, Leviticus 4:6 reads: "καὶ βάψει ὁ ἱερεὺς τὸν δάκτυλον εἰς τὸ αἷμα" ("And the priest shall dip his finger into the blood"). In Job 9:31 the verb is used metaphorically of a plunging into moral filth (ῥυπος), and in Daniel 4:30 and 4:21 it indicates an enveloping with dew

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<sup>1</sup>Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, A Greek-English Lexicon (hereinafter referred to as Lexicon) (New York: Harper and Brothers, Publishers, 1853), p. 260.

<sup>2</sup>Homer, The Odyssey, Vol. I, trans. by A. T. Murray, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by E. Capps, et al., (New York: B. P. Putnam's Sons, 1927), pp. 330-31.

<sup>3</sup>Euripides, "Orestes," in Vol. II of Euripides, trans. by Arthur S. Way, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by E. Capps, et al., (New York: B. P. Putman's Sons, 1924), pp. 183-83.

<sup>4</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 132.

from heaven. The verb appears only four times in the New Testament (Lk. 16:24; Jn. 12:26 [twice]; Rev. 19:13). Three times it refers to a dipping of the finger or object in a liquid while in the last example it indicates the result of a dying or staining action. It is used frequently in this last sense of dying or staining in the papyri. The following is a second century A.D. example: "οἱ μὲν εἰ[σι] γναφεῖς οἱ δὲ βαφεῖς τὴν ἐργασίαν" ("The fullers and dyers are making a profit"). A substantive form, βαπτρά, is also cited by Moulton and Milligan, meaning "coloured garments."<sup>1</sup>

The short form of the verb is older and historically tended to be replaced with the longer form, βαπτίζω.<sup>2</sup> The -ίζω ending may at times carry the idea of repetition, intensity, or causation, but historically as it supplanted the shorter form, it also tended to lose any distinctiveness from βάπτω.<sup>3</sup>

The verb βαπτίζω appears quite frequently in classical literature, often connoting the plunging of an object into a liquid, as noted in the use of βάπτω. Liddell and

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<sup>1</sup>James Hope Moulton and George Milligan, The Vocabulary of the Greek Testament Illustrated from the Papyri and Other Non-Literary Sources (hereinafter referred to as Vocabulary) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1930), p. 103.

<sup>2</sup>Archibald Thomas Robertson, A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research (hereinafter referred to as Grammar) (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1934), p. 149.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

Scott point out its repetitive significance, "to dip repeatedly," but it is also used to describe the activity of a sinking ship, which, in the very nature of the case, is non-repetitive. Josephus uses it frequently in this manner: "πρὸ τῆς θυέλλης ἐβάπτισεν ἐκὼν τὸ σκάφος" ("He deliberately sinks his ship before the storm").<sup>1</sup> This same connotation of the submerging of an object into liquid accompanies its usage in the Koine and New Testament era. The well-known story of the Syrian Naaman illustrates a septuagintal usage: "καὶ κατέβη Ναίμαν καὶ ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ιορδάνῃ" ("And Naaman went down and dipped himself in the Jordan"). From the papyri Moulton and Milligan cite the following example: "ἀπὸ νεναυαγῆ(ότος) πλοίου ἀπὸ πάντωνος βεβαπτισμ(ένου)" ("From a boat which has been shipwrecked, from a skiff which has been submerged").<sup>2</sup>

One aspect of the thesis of this paper, however, is to demonstrate from literary examples that βαπτίζω may also be employed to communicate a metaphorical or nonphysical concept. Therefore, a number of metaphorical usages will be cited, listing them chronologically according to the date of the composition of the literature as well as according to genre.

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<sup>1</sup>Josephus, The Jewish Wars, trans. by H. St. J. Thackeray, Vol. III of Josephus in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 678-79.

<sup>2</sup>Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary, p. 102.

Metaphorical Usage in Literary Greek

Plato (fourth century B.C.) in his Euthydemus, uses βαπτίζω in a context in which a young student is being overwhelmed with philosophical questions: "καὶ ἐγὼ γνοῦς βαπτιζόμενον τὸ μειράκιον" ("When I, perceiving the lad was going under").<sup>1</sup> Philo (first century A.D.) uses the verb in a similar sense but in reference to being overwhelmed from excessive drinking: "οἶδα δὲ τινας, [οἷ] ἐπειδὴν ἀκροθάρακες γένωνται, πρὶν τελέως βαπτισθῆναι, τὸν εἰς τὴν ὑστεραίαν πότον ἐξ ἐπιδόσεως καὶ συμβολῶν προευντρεπιζομένους" ("I know of some who when they are half-seas-over and before they have completely gone under arrange donations and subscriptions in preparation for tomorrow's bout").<sup>2</sup> Plutarch (first century A.D.), in his biography of Galba, speaking of one swamped with financial debts, writes: "καὶ πεντακισχιλίων μυριάδων ὀφλήμασι βεβαπτισμένον" ("immersed in debts amounting to five thousands").<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Plato, "Euthydemus," in Vol. IV of Plato, trans. by W. R. M. Lamb, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by E. Capps, et al., (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1924), pp. 398-99.

<sup>2</sup>Philo, "De Vita Contemplativa," in Vol. IX of Philo, trans. by R. H. Colson, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1941), pp. 140-41.

<sup>3</sup>Plutarch, "Galba," in Vol. XI of Plutarch's Lives, trans. by Bernadotte Perrin, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by E. Capps, et al., (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926), pp. 250-51.

The works of Josephus provide many examples of the various usages of βαπτίζειν, including the metaphorical. In reference to the internal strife within Jerusalem before A.D. 70, Josephus writes: "ὁ δὲ καὶ δίχα τῆς στάσεως ὕστερον ἐβάπτισεν τὴν πόλιν" ("Yet it was just this circumstance which, irrespectively of the sedition, eventually wrecked the city").<sup>1</sup> In a usage similar to that of Philo's, Josephus describes an aspect of Ishmael's murder of Gedaliah in the following terms: "θεασάμενος δ' αὐτὸν οὕτως ἔχοντα καὶ βεβαπτισμένον εἰς ἀναισθησίαν καὶ ὕπνον ὑπὸ τῆς μέθης" ("Seeing him in this condition, sunken into unconsciousness and a drunken sleep").<sup>2</sup>

A later author, the Neo-platonist Plotinus (third century A.D.) also uses the verb metaphorically: "Ἄλλα ὅταν μὴ παρακολουθῇ βαπτισθεὶς ἢ νόσοις ἢ μάγων τέχναις" ("But suppose he is unconscious, his mind swamped by sickness or magic arts.").<sup>3</sup> It may be seen from these examples, covering a time span of seven centuries, that the verb

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<sup>1</sup>Josephus, The Jewish Wars, trans. by H. St. J. Thackeray, Vol. III of Josephus in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), pp. 49-51.

<sup>2</sup>Josephus, Jewish Antiquities, trans. by Ralph Marcus, Vol. VI of Josephus in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), pp. 252-53.

<sup>3</sup>Plotinus, "Enneads," in Vol. I of Plotinus, trans. by A. H. Armstrong, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, et al., (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), pp. 194-95.

βαπτίζειν, in addition to describing the dipping of an object into a liquid, is used metaphorically to describe any overwhelming, permeating or enveloping activity or the induction into a condition. It has been used in reference to philosophical questions, inebriation, financial indebtedness, the destruction of a city, and sickness.

### Metaphorical Usage in the Papyri

Moulton and Milligan cite one example of a similar metaphorical usage from the papyri. A second century B.C. fragment reads: "καὶν ἰδῆς ὅτι μέλλομεν σωθῆναι, τότε βαπτιζώμεθα" ("and though you know that when we were about to be saved, then we were overwhelmed"). A significant comment is added to the citation: "That the word was already in use in this metaphorical sense . . ., even among uneducated people, strikingly illustrates our Lord's speaking of His Passion as a 'baptism'."<sup>1</sup>

### Metaphorical Usage in Biblical Literature

#### The Septuagint

In the Septuagint the verb is used only twice, in 2 Kings 5:14 and Isaiah 21:4. In the first the usage is obviously physical; the verb appears in the third person aorist middle, and describes the activity of Naaman dipping himself seven times in the Jordan River. It translates the

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<sup>1</sup>Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary, p. 102.

Hebrew  $\text{לָּטַב}$ , which is also the Hebrew word behind the septuagintal occurrences of  $\beta\acute{\alpha}\pi\tau\omega$ . The Hebrew verb simply means to "dip."<sup>1</sup> The metaphorical usage of the verb, however, appears in Isaiah 21:4, where the verse reads: " $\text{הָ אֲנוּמָא מֵ בִּטְטִיזֵי}$ " ("The iniquity has overwhelmed me"). It translates the Hebrew  $\text{הִצִּיף}$ , to "overwhelm,"<sup>2</sup> in the piel form, and thus may reflect the intense significance of the  $-\acute{\iota}\zeta\omega$  ending. More important is the fact that here another example is provided of its metaphorical employment.

#### The New Testament

The subject of baptism in the New Testament is a wide and difficult one which has resulted in no small divisions within the church of Jesus Christ. The verb occurs seventy-seven times in the New Testament.<sup>3</sup> While the technical usage of the verb  $\beta\alpha\pi\tau\acute{\iota}\zeta\epsilon\iota\nu$  is fully acknowledged in connection with John's baptism and the later Christian baptism, the examples cited here will be those that obviously or possibly also reflect a metaphorical usage as discovered in extra-biblical literature.

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<sup>1</sup>Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 371.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>3</sup>W. G. Moulton and A. S. Geden, eds., A Concordance to the Greek Testament, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1899), pp. 138-39.

### The Gospels

In the Gospels the majority of occurrences of βαπτίζειν refer in some way to John's baptism. It is also used in reference to the ceremonial washing of hands by the Pharisees (cf. Mk. 7:4; Lk. 11:38) and to Christian baptism (cf. Mt. 28:19). All three of the above kinds of baptisms describe a physical activity of the dipping or enveloping of an object in or with water.

Two remaining usages are especially appropriate to this paper. They include the Spirit baptism prophesied by John and the baptism of suffering which described Christ's experience on the cross and was promised to the disciples as something with which they shall in some way be involved and identified. Both usages demand a metaphorical interpretation of the verb βαπτίζειν. The promise of Spirit baptism is set in marked contrast to water baptism by John the Baptist in all four Gospels (cf. Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33). The second baptism is remarkably similar in significance with the extra-biblical examples in which one element overwhelms another.

### Acts

The book of Acts contains only two references in which βαπτίζειν has a metaphorical significance, and they are identical with the Spirit baptism promised in the Gospels. In Acts 1:5 again the water baptism of John is set

in contrast to the Spirit baptism by Jesus before His ascension. It is in Acts 2:14 that this promise is initially fulfilled, but the verb in this usage does not appear again until Acts 11:16, where Peter is relating to the Jerusalem church the bestowal of the Spirit by God on the Gentiles.

### The Epistles

The use of βαπτίζω in the epistles presents crucial exegetical problems, and a perusal of the studies on the subject creates a distinct impression that the conclusions have been drawn before the studies were begun, usually along the lines of individual ecclesiology or systems of theology. Many scholars, in approaching a verse such as Galatians 3:27, simply assume that βαπτίζειν in the epistles means water baptism and therefore are forced to give the ordinance a sacramental interpretation or at least see it as the means, along with faith, by which a believer is actually incorporated into Christ. Oepke argues that though baptism does not mechanically, apart from faith, have efficacy, it is the act of God which "places us objectively in Christ."<sup>1</sup> The same author explicitly denies a metaphorical use of βαπτίζειν in similar Pauline passages.<sup>2</sup> Those who do argue

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht Oepke, "βάπτω, βαπτίζω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. I, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), pp. 540-41.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 539.

for a metaphorical or spiritual usage<sup>1</sup> are regarded as "naive" by more "responsible" theologians.<sup>2</sup> One recent student of Spirit baptism does allow for a metaphorical usage in certain contexts, and is bold enough to insist, "βαπτίζειν itself does not specify water."<sup>3</sup>

As in the Gospels and Acts, there are unquestionably occurrences in the epistles in which water and particularly the Christian ordinance is in view. There are, however, several contexts in which the verb (or noun) communicates far more understandable truth if it is considered to carry a strictly metaphorical or spiritual significance. These include, in addition to Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:1-4, 1 Corinthians 10:2 and 12:13, Ephesians 4:5, Colossians 2:12, and possibly 1 Peter 3:21.

#### Further Arguments for a Metaphorical Usage

Several factors are supportive of this view, including the linguistic legitimacy, the textual evidence, and certain theological elements.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Place of the Sacraments in the Teaching of St. Paul," in Vol. XIII of The Expositor, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1917), pp. 379ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. G. R. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 151.

<sup>3</sup>James D. G. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1970), p. 18.

### Linguistical Argument

First, it must be conceded that the verb βαπτίζω is used metaphorically both extra-biblically and in the Gospels and Acts. A metaphorical meaning in the cited passages cannot be discounted on linguistic grounds. There is also the obvious truth that certain words employed in the New Testament, especially by Paul in his careful theological arguments, are given unique, theological significance, illustrated in his metaphorical use of ἐκκλησία.<sup>1</sup>

### Textual Argument

The textual evidence also argues for a metaphorical usage. A distinctness emerges when the cited passages containing the verb in connection with Christ are examined. It is always simply βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς Χριστόν or a variation of these words (cf. Gal. 3:27). In every other example of similar language, but where the Christian ordinance is obviously in view, the text either includes the formula εἰς τὸ ὄνομα, or the verb is used without any modifiers (cf. Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; 1 Cor. 1:13; etc.).

It is true that in extra-biblical literature "εἰς

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Earl D. Radmacher, The Nature of the Church (Portland, OR: Western Baptist Press, 1972), pp. 132-33; also Richard Chenevix Trench, Synonyms of the New Testament (reprint of 1880 ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1973), p. 1, "There are words whose history it is peculiarly interesting to watch; . . . words which the Church did not invent, but has assumed into its service, and employed in a far loftier sense than any to which the world has ever put them before."

with the name can be used instead of εἰς (το) ὄνομα."<sup>1</sup>

Prat, a Catholic scholar, in fact, says, "In the New Testament era the name was sometimes almost synonymous with the person; there would therefore be nothing extraordinary in the equivalence of the expressions to baptize in (εἰς) Christ and to baptize in the name (εἰς το ὄνομα) of Christ."<sup>2</sup> Apart from other factors this linguistic argument would be quite weighty, but in view of what has already been adduced, as well as the fact that extra-biblical usage does not in itself dictate biblical interpretation, a distinction is still perfectly legitimate.<sup>3</sup>

#### Theological Argument

The most cogent argument of all favoring the metaphorical sense is the theological concept of the believer's union with Christ. The expression ἐν Χριστῷ or variations

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<sup>1</sup>Hans Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. V, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967), p. 245; cf. also Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary, p. 451.

<sup>2</sup>Fernand Prat, The Theology of Saint Paul, Vol. II, trans. by John L. Stodard (Westminster, MD: The Newman Bookshop, 1927), p. 465.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 112, for a denial of this equivalence; also C. F. D. Moule, The Phenomenon of the New Testament (London: SCM Press Ltd.), pp. 38f., "It seems to me that the burden of proof rests on those who assume that the straight 'into' (εἰς) is identical with 'into the name' (εἰς το ὄνομα)."

thereof (ἐν τῷ κυρίῳ, ἐν αὐτῷ, etc.) appear 164 times in the epistles.<sup>1</sup> The prepositional phrase εἰς Χριστόν or εἰς with a redemptive term expresses essentially the same thing (cf. Rom. 16:5; Gal. 3:24; 1 Th. 2:12; 1 Cor. 1:9; Rom 5:2; Eph. 1:5; 2:15; Col. 1:13; etc.). The concept is very central to the context of Galatians 3:27. Only those who have been baptized into Christ are in fact in Christ (Gal. 3:26-27). Other references without the verb βαπτίζεσθαι teach the same concept, including 1 Corinthians 1:30-- "By God's operation (ἐξ αὐτοῦ) you are in Christ Jesus (ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ); 2 Corinthians 1:21-- "Now the One who is establishing<sup>2</sup> us with you in Christ (εἰς Χριστόν) and anointed us is God"; Ephesians 2:15-- "in order that the two (Jews and Gentiles) he might create in Him (ἐν αὐτῷ) into one new man by making peace."

Although there are many variations in the applications of the "ἐν Χριστῷ" formula in the Pauline literature,

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<sup>1</sup>Deissmann, Gustav Adolf, Paul, A Study in Social and Religious History (hereinafter referred to as Paul), trans. by William E. Wilson (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 140.

<sup>2</sup>This participle (βεβαίων) is perhaps an iterative present; God is in the process of establishing from time to time new believers into Christ along with those already in the position of being "in Christ." Cf. Robertson, Grammar, p. 880, who graphs the iterative present as (.....).

at the base is the concept of corporate personality,<sup>1</sup> or the solidarity of the redeemed in Christ's line as opposed to the solidarity of the natural race in the Adamic line (cf. Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). Whatever the human origin of the concept of corporate personality may be, the absolute reality and truthfulness of solidarity in or union with Christ as accomplished by divine power must not be overlooked. On the basis of the redemptive work on the cross the man who believes is transferred out of the corporate personality of Adam into that of the last Adam, Jesus Christ. This is most clearly seen in the intensely theological passage of Romans 5:12-6:11 (cf. 1 Cor. 15:21-22). To read a physical activity into the baptism motif of Romans 6:1-4 is to impute to that ordinance an efficacious value taught no place explicitly by Paul and which is at least doubtful in light of the spiritual and forensic thrust of this passage.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. T. W. Manson, The Servant-Messiah (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953), p. 74, "This term is a convenient expression of the fact that in the Semitic mind there is a constant oscillation between the conception of the social group--family, clan, tribe, nation--as an association of individuals in the plural or as a single living social organism about which one can more properly speak in the singular." Cf. also H. Wheeler Robinson, Corporate Personality in Ancient Israel (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1964), p. 33; Ernest Best, One Body in Christ (London: S. P. C. K., 1955), pp. 43, 203-04; Eduard Schweizer, "σῶμα," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VII, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 1072. Modern consensus sees its origin in Hebrew thought and literature.

### Summary and Conclusion

In view of the extra-biblical as well as biblical examples of the metaphorical use of βαπτίζειν, the textual evidence of a distinct concept and the theological argument of union with Christ, the legitimacy of regarding the Pauline expression βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς Χριστόν as communicating a spiritual truth totally divorced from the Christian ordinance of baptism must be conceded. In the following discussion of the Galatian passage, the thesis builds upon this concept.

## CHAPTER III

### AN ANALYSIS OF GALATIANS 3:27

The third chapter of Galatians is quite significant and instructive in arriving at a proper understanding of soteriology from a trans-dispensational perspective. In typical Pauline fashion it looks back to the Abrahamic Covenant, in which the divine plan of salvation was adumbrated far more concretely than ever before; it explains the seeming enigma of the Mosaic economy; and finally it unfolds the significance of the mature faith in relation to the people of God in the coming and work of Christ. The concept of baptism into Christ stands at the climax of the argument and therefore is worthy of careful study.

#### The History of Interpretation

From the earliest sub-apostolic era to the present all references to the concept of baptism into Christ have generally been interpreted as a reference to the act of water baptism.<sup>1</sup> A survey of the history of interpretation,

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. a significant statement by Lewis B. Smedes, All Things Made New (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1970), p. 139, "There is no getting around Paul's plain language and, evangelical shyness about sacramental efficacy notwithstanding, there is no avoiding the fact that it is in baptism that we are both buried and raised with Christ."

not necessarily of Galatians 3:27, but of baptism into Christ in general, demonstrates the extremes to which scholars have been forced in their interpretations.

#### Baptism in the Pre-Reformation Period

The early sub-apostolic era is notorious for its continuation of legalism and the externalization of the Christian faith. While in the apostolic era Paul desperately fought against the heresy that circumcision effects justification, in the next period the comparable belief that water baptism effects regeneration, reception of the Spirit, and union with Christ was rife. In 2 Clement baptism appears to be connected with the seal of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> Ignatius suggested baptism as the event in which the believer is equipped to wage the Christian warfare,<sup>2</sup> while Justin regarded it as effecting regeneration, illumination, and the forgiveness of sins.<sup>3</sup>

In the post-Nicene period even more dramatic divine

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<sup>1</sup>Clement, "2 Clement," in Vol. I of The Apostolic Fathers, trans. by Kirsopp Lake, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by T. E. Page, et al. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), p. 141. The authorship of 2 Clement is disputed, but it reflects early Christian thought.

<sup>2</sup>Ignatius, "The Epistle of Ignatius to Polycarp," in Vol. I of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>Justin, "The First Apology of Justin," in Vol. I of The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 183.

effects were imputed to baptism. Ambrose was careful to link the efficacy of baptism to the cross, yet insisted that God's power operated through the baptismal waters and "our sins are remitted through baptism."<sup>1</sup> Chrysostom compared the efficacy of water baptism with the effects of fire on ore: the baptismal fount makes "those who have been washed in it golden instead of earthy, since the Spirit at that time falls like fire on our souls."<sup>2</sup> Chrysostom also connected it to the cross in the death, burial, and resurrection motif and argued for trine baptism since the entire trinity accomplished the total work.<sup>3</sup> In connection with the concepts surrounding Galatians 3:27, Clement of Alexandria wrote: "When we are baptized, we are enlightened; being enlightened, we become adopted sons; becoming adopted sons, we are made perfect; and becoming perfect, we are made divine."<sup>4</sup> It is virtually the unified consensus of the

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<sup>1</sup>Ambrose, Theological and Dogmatic Works, Vol. XLV, trans. by Ray Joseph Deferrari, in The Fathers of the Church, ed. by Ray Joseph Deferrari (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1963), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup>John Chrysostom, "Commentary on Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist," Vol. XXXIII, trans. by Sister Thomas Aquinas Goggin, in The Fathers of the Church, ed. by Ray Joseph Deferrari (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1957), p. 100.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>4</sup>Clement of Alexandria, "Christ the Educator," Vol. XXIII, trans. by Simon P. Wood, in The Fathers of the Church, ed. by Ray Joseph Deferrari (Washington: The Catholic University Press, 1954), p. 26.

early church leaders that in water baptism the Christian life is truly begun.

### Baptism in the Reformation

The subject of baptism became very divisive from the time of the Reformation to the present day. Apart from the controversy concerning the mode of baptism, its efficacy for regeneration in contrast to its purely symbolic value is still being discussed.

Martin Luther explicitly insisted that water baptism is the locus of spiritual regeneration. In commenting on Galatians 3:27, Luther states:

But to put on Christ according to the Gospel is a matter, not of imitation but of a new birth and a new creation, namely, that I put on Christ Himself . . . . We were dressed in the leather garment of Adam. . . . He must be put off with all his activities, so that from sons of Adam we may be changed into sons of God (Eph 4:22 and Col. 3:9). This does not happen by a change of clothing or by any laws or works; it happens by the rebirth and renewal that takes place in Baptism. . . . Paul teaches that Baptism is not a sign but the garment of Christ. Hence Baptism is a very powerful and effective thing.<sup>1</sup>

While Calvin took a more symbolic view of baptism, for those who genuinely believe he notes that Paul always connects the sacrament to the truth associated with it.

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Luther, Lectures on Galatians, 1535, Chapters 1-4, Vol. XXVI of Luther's Works, ed. by Jaroslav Pelikan and Walter A. Hausen (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), pp. 352-53.

Galatians 3:27 is water baptism and has great meaning and value for the believer.<sup>1</sup>

### Baptism and "In Christ" in the Modern Era

Since the Reformation there has not been any broad consensus on baptism except that a trend is discernible toward a sacramental view among varying schools of scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Since it is closely connected with the incorporation of the believer into Christ, discussion since Deissmann's proposal of the concept of a mystical union in a pneumatic mode of being<sup>3</sup> has tended to interact with this novel view, either rejecting or modifying it.

The Catholic scholar Cerfaux opposes any mystical concept of Christ. In commenting on Romans 6:1-4 and Galatians 3:27 he argues against mystical incorporation in any sense. Paul is simply speaking of water baptism: "Baptism into Christ means Christian baptism quite simply, and 'in Jesus Christ' has no connotations for them of a collective Christ, or of a Christ who is a spiritual substance."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>John Calvin, Commentaries on the Epistles to the Galatians and Ephesians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1948), p. 112.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dale Moody, "Baptism in Recent Research," Review and Expositor, 65 (1968), 13-22.

<sup>3</sup>Deissmann, Paul, pp. 140-44. Deissmann, however, denies that baptism effects the union; it "seals it," (p. 145).

<sup>4</sup>L. Cerfaux, Christ in the Theology of St. Paul, trans. by Geoffrey Webb and Andrian Walker (New York: Herder and Herder, 1959), p. 332.

Another earlier Catholic author does speak of the incorporation into the "mystical body" of Christ through water baptism but distinguishes the person of Christ as a personal entity from His body, the Church, which is permeated with His Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

As noted earlier, all but a few Protestant scholars interpret the expression as water baptism. The discussion then broadens in variety as the essence of union with Christ is developed. One Anglican of the present century did argue for a spiritual baptism in Romans 6, Ephesians 4, 1 Peter 3:21, and presumably 1 Corinthians 12:13 as well as Galatians 3:27. Concerning Romans 6:1-4 he writes, "The passage when read in the light of the context clearly teaches the spiritual meaning of baptism and not the literal ordinance."<sup>2</sup> A more recent British scholar, J. D. G. Dunn, also distinguishes spiritual baptism from the ordinance. In reference to Galatians 3:27 he writes, "βαπτίζεσθαι εἰς Χριστόν is simply a metaphor drawn from the rite of baptism to describe . . . the entry of the believer into the spiritual relationship of the Christian with Christ."<sup>3</sup>

This non-sacramental view of baptism into Christ is typical of the dispensational approach to the issue. Chafer

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<sup>1</sup>Prat, The Theology of Saint Paul, pp. 258-59.

<sup>2</sup>Thomas, "The Place of the Sacraments in the Teaching of St. Paul," pp. 379-82.

<sup>3</sup>Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 109.

regards the baptism of Galatians 3:27 as accomplished by the Holy Spirit and parallel to 1 Corinthians 12:13.<sup>1</sup> Unger identifies 1 Corinthians 12:13, Romans 6:1-4; Galatians 3:27; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; and 1 Peter 3:21 as Spirit baptism.<sup>2</sup>

### The Language and Grammar of Galatians 3:27

In view of the disharmony of interpretations of the concept, a careful exegesis of the language and grammar of Galatians 3:27 as well as its context is appropriate and should yield positive results for a deeper understanding of Pauline theology.

#### Ὅσοι Ἦρῃ

The first word encountered for exegesis stands second in the Greek text, the postpositive conjunction γάρ. It is a compound of γέ and ἄρα, and since γέ carries an emphatic force and ἄρα an inferential sense, γάρ is used to express inference, though its use varies from cause, reason, continuation, to simply introducing an explanatory clause.<sup>3</sup> In Galatians 3:26-27 the conjunction is used twice; the γάρ

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology, Vol. VI, Pneumatology (Dallas: Dallas Seminary Press, 1948), p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>Merrill F. Unger, The Baptizing Work of the Holy Spirit (Wheaton, IL: Van Kampen Press, 1953), p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 151; Robertson, Grammar, p. 1190.

of verse 26 introduces the reason why believers are no longer under the law, while in verse 27 it introduces the mechanics of sonship. The second γάρ is therefore either explanatory or mildly causal.

The correlative pronoun ὅσοι is used of a number of individuals and has its antecedent in the πάντες and second person plural ἐστε of verse 27. It emphasizes the identity of the participants in sonship with those of baptism in verse 27 and indicates the occasion of the baptism as equal to the occasion of the believer's faith in Christ.<sup>1</sup>

This chronological identity as well as the explanatory use of γάρ throws great suspicion on the view that initial faith and resulting sonship may be separated chronologically from the act of water baptism and yet that efficacious value may be imputed to water baptism. Unless water baptism is regarded as the occasion of initial faith and therefore the time sonship is effected,<sup>2</sup> the baptism of verse 27 must be something other than water baptism.

#### Εἰς Χριστόν

In contrast to Romans 6:3, the prepositional phrase εἰς Χριστόν precedes rather than follows the verb εβαπτίσθητε

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Chafer, Pneumatology, p. 143.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, p. 151, "In baptism faith receives the Christ in whom the adoption is effected."

in Galatians 3:27. The emphatic positioning of Χριστόν is true in verse 27b as well, and together they reinforce the emphasis of the context, that the position of the believer in Christ means removal from the law. The first phrase also relates closely in meaning to the phrase ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ of verse 26 and therefore stands nearly in juxtaposition to it.

The significance of εἰς Χριστόν is seen first through an understanding of the preposition εἰς. The lexical possibilities of its use include the idea of "motion into a thing or into its immediate vicinity," referring to a place, time, degree or goal, as well as cause, purpose, distribution (with numbers), and in replacement of ἐν for a locative sense.<sup>1</sup> Robertson points out that εἰς in fact developed from ἐν, and in modern Greek has displaced ἐν. Therefore, εἰς alone simply means "in," but in connection with the accusative case and verbs of motion, it carries the idea of movement toward something.<sup>2</sup> Turner notes the same lack of distinction in Hellenistic Greek between motion (εἰς) and rest (ἐν), but attributes to Paul's literature a

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<sup>1</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, pp. 227-29; cf. also Nigel Turner, Syntax, Vol. III of A Grammar of New Testament Greek, by James Hope Moulton (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1963), p. 266.

<sup>2</sup>Robertson, Grammar, p. 591.

definite distinction between the two prepositions, so that with εἰς "a process may be envisaged."<sup>1</sup>

In view of Paul's use of εἰς with Christ as the object, the conclusion may not be escaped that in some fashion believers are placed in some local sense into Christ so as to be considered "in Christ." It is interesting that neither in Galatians 3:27 nor Romans 6:1-4 is the element effecting this baptism mentioned. In a survey of the New Testament use of βαπτίζειν, the element is almost invariably connected with the preposition ἐν or the instrumental dative. There is baptism in the Jordan (Mt. 3:6), in water (Mt. 3:11), and in the Holy Spirit and fire (Mt. 3:11). An exception may be Mark 1:9, where Turner notes that it may be εἰς for ἐν or a pregnant use of εἰς, implying the activity of coming to the Jordan.<sup>2</sup>

The preposition εἰς is used in connection with βαπτίζεσθαι to point to the condition or state in which the baptized person stands. For example, in Matthew 3:11 it is a baptism in water (ἐν ὕδατι) unto repentance (εἰς μετάνοιαν). In Acts 2:38 the baptism is unto the forgiveness of sins (εἰς ἄφεσιν τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν).<sup>3</sup> There are,

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<sup>1</sup>Turner, Syntax, p. 256.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. H. E. Dana and Julius R. Mantey, A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament (Toronto: The MacMillan Company, 1955), p. 104, for the causal use of εἰς; Turner, Syntax, p. 266, notes that the causal designation is not determined linguistically but theologically.

however, both biblical (Mk. 1:9) and extra-biblical examples in which εἰς points to the element which constitutes the final sphere or location as well. Oepke quotes Plutarch's use in De Superstitione: "καὶ βάπτισον σεαυτὸν εἰς θάλασσαν" ("And baptize yourself into the sea").<sup>1</sup>

Christ could be regarded as either the "element" into which believers are baptised and therefore in which they stand or as simply the goal, condition, or state resulting from a baptism. The latter view may regard the element as either water or the Holy Spirit, and Christ would be defined as the body of believers into which individuals are initiated by water baptism or by Spirit baptism. According to the former view believers are in some manner "dipped into" or, less crudely, inducted into Christ with no other medium demanded.

Because of the forensic and positional nature of the argument throughout the context and the absence at this point of any reference to the Holy Spirit, the former view of the significance of εἰς is more accurate. Spirit baptism is closely connected to this induction into Christ, but its relevance is in the application to the believer's experience of the forensic position effected by this baptism into Christ (cf. Gal 4:6).

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<sup>1</sup>Oepke, "βάπτω, βαπτίζω," p. 532. Cf. also the example cited above by Josephus, p. 24.

ἔβαπτίσθητε

The lexical significance of βαπτίζεῖν has been previously examined. The position presented is that in this context it is being used metaphorically to communicate the spiritual truth of the process effecting union with Christ. In the same sense that believers have been transferred out of the authority of darkness into Christ's kingdom by the power of God, (Col. 1:13), so believers have been baptized or brought into union with Christ. It is essentially a forensic concept disconnected from the believer's experience.

The verb appears in the aorist tense, the normal form of the verb when individual subjects are in view (cf. ὅσοι). Since in the nature of the verb a decisive act is performed, the best designation of its Aktionsart is the effective aorist.<sup>1</sup> It is an accomplished action in the life of each believer at the point of faith in Christ, so that the emphasis in the context is on the results of the action, union with Christ and sonship.<sup>2</sup> Since the parallel verb ἐνεδύσασθε is also in the aorist tense, the chronological identity of the action of both is strongly implied.

The voice of ἐβαπτίσθητε is passive, indicating that the subjects are the recipients of the action denoted in the

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<sup>1</sup>Robertson, Grammar, pp. 834-35.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Turner, Syntax, p. 72, who in discussing the effective aorist, says, "The emphasis is all on the conclusion or results of an action."

verb. If the baptism is the Christian ordinance, the ones accomplishing this baptism would have been possibly Paul (1 Cor. 1:16) or other believers in the churches of Galatia. However, if a divine operation is in view, then the one effecting the action would be no one less than God Himself, on the analogy of Colossians 1:13 and 1 Corinthians 1:30. Dunn, though linking it with Spirit baptism, explains, "It is God who effects the incorporation into Christ."<sup>1</sup> It is hardly legitimate to say both parties execute the same act for the individual believer.

The verb is in the indicative mood and though the reality of a case is not thereby proven, here it does communicate a reality, qualified by the previous sentence which assumes genuine faith. The second person plural brings into scope all those to whom Paul is writing, both Jews and Gentiles. Individuals living in the vicinity of Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch have actually become participants in this reality.

#### Ἐνεδύσαθε

This very descriptive verb which stands in precise parallel to ἐβαπτίσθητε has led scholars to some interesting though doubtful views on its significance. Morphologically it is a compound word, consisting of ἐν (in, on) and δύνω

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<sup>1</sup>Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 112.

δύω (to submerge, plunge, or to draw on).<sup>1</sup> In composition the idea is literally that of dressing or clothing someone.<sup>2</sup> In the classical literature it is frequently used in this literal sense. It is commonly used, however, in a metaphorical sense, as to be entangled in a net, to enter into a contest, or to undertake a matter.<sup>3</sup> The last usage is illustrated in Xenophon's Cyropaedia: "ἐνέδω μὲν οὖν οὕτω γνοῦς εἰς ταύτην τὴν ἐπιμέλειαν" ("In this conviction, therefore, he took upon himself this change").<sup>4</sup> This is a reference to Cyrus, who "clothed himself" with a mental attitude befitting his leadership position. In the papyri it is used literally of clothing, though Moulton and Milligan also give an example of a metaphorical use in which a beautiful goddess is turned into an old woman and then was finally "clothed" again with her own beauty.<sup>5</sup>

The Septuagint uses the word quite often, and always in translation of לָבַשׁ, to "put on (a garment), wear, clothe,

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht Oepke, "ἐνδύω," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 318.

<sup>2</sup>Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 263.

<sup>3</sup>Liddell and Scott, Lexicon, p. 457.

<sup>4</sup>Xenophon, Cyropaedia, Vol. II of Xenophon, trans. by Walter Miller, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by E. Capps, et al. (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1914), pp. 310-11.

<sup>5</sup>Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary, pp. 212-13.

be clothed."<sup>1</sup> Here it is also used frequently in a metaphorical sense of putting on salvation (2 Chr. 6:41), shame (Job 8:22), righteousness (Job 29:14; Ps. 132:0), strength and glory (Is. 52:1), and a garment of salvation (Is. 61:10).

In the New Testament it appears twenty-eight times.<sup>2</sup> In the Gospels, out of eleven occurrences, only once is it used in a metaphorical sense. In Luke 24:49 it refers to the promised gift of or baptism in the Holy Spirit. While it is not used in John and only once in Acts in a literal sense, in the epistles it is invariably used metaphorically. In Revelation it is used three times in a literal sense. The underlying significance of the verb, whether used literally or metaphorically, is that one object or person is clothed or enveloped with something else, so that the recipient of the action stands clothed and affected by a garment or characteristic outside of himself.<sup>3</sup>

In the epistles it signifies the appropriation and application to the lives of believers the virtues and qualities commensurate with the person of Christ. Though most examples are used imperatively, it is here where Galatians 3:27, with the indicative, is distinct.

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<sup>1</sup>Brown, Driver, and Briggs, A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament, p. 527.

<sup>2</sup>Moulton and Geden, A Concordance to the Greek Testament, pp. 334-35.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, Lexicon, p. 263, 2b.

Some authors have attempted to explain the indicative concept from extra-biblical parallels such as the ritual attendant to Hellenistic mystery cults. Thus Dibelius says Galatians 3:27 "can be most easily understood with reference to the rite through which, in the mystery cults, the initiate was made a god by putting on the garment of the god."<sup>1</sup> Oepke rightly rejects this parallel, insisting that there "are no parallels for Paul's indicative usage."<sup>2</sup>

Others have seen in the metaphor an allusion to the donning of baptismal garments after emerging from the water,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Martin Dibelius, Paul, trans. by Franke Clark (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 105; cf. also Kirsopp Lake, The Earlier Epistles of St. Paul (London: Rivingtons, 1911), p. 389; Ulrich Wilckens, "στολή," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. VII, ed. by Gerhard Friedrich, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), p. 688, "Twelve garments are given to the mystagogue which he has to put on successively to symbolize the mystical progress which Isis enables him to make through the twelve cosmic zones. Finally he is invested with the olympiaca stola, a garment of fine linen with the twelve signs of the zodiac. This symbolizes mystical identification with the heavenly deity itself, which lifts him up to itself and in so doing causes him to overcome the whole world in his ascent."

<sup>2</sup>Oepke, "ἐνδύω," p. 320.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. W. G. Flemington, The New Testament Doctrine of Baptism (London: S. P. C. K., 1948), p. 57, for a description: "There was a moment in the life of all of them when they stripped off their garments and went down into the water. They were baptized 'into Christ,' so as to belong to Christ. They came up out of the water and put on their garments. As they robed themselves again it meant that in that very moment they 'put on Christ.'" Flemington rejects this view.

but this view has been discounted since it is anachronistic for this early date in ecclesiastical practice.<sup>1</sup> In fact the later development of such practices may reflect the dismal syncretism of the understanding of the Christian ordinance with the rituals of the mystery cults mentioned above.<sup>2</sup>

The metaphor may also have been borrowed from the Roman custom in which the youth, at a certain age, "exchanged the toga praetexta for the toga virilis and passed into the rank of citizens."<sup>3</sup> This has much to commend it in view of Paul's familiarity with Roman law and the sense of the context. Yet the object with which believers are clothed is the person of Christ and the analogy in the Roman custom may impute too much of a physical sense to it which in any case would still not explain the metaphor.

Undoubtedly the source of the Pauline expression is to be seen in its metaphorical use in the Old Testament. As noted earlier, many concepts such as salvation and righteousness are viewed as a garment in which individuals are clothed, and thus in Paul's expression the believer is

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<sup>1</sup>Lightfoot, Galatians, pp. 149-50.

<sup>2</sup>Oepke, "βάπτω, βαπτίζω," pp. 543-44.

<sup>3</sup>Frederic Rendall, "Galatians," in Vol. III of Expositor's Greek Testament, ed. by W. Robertson Nicoll (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 174.

represented as so closely identified with Christ that all the character and redemptive values of Christ are imputed to the believer (cf. Is. 61:10; Zech. 3:3-5). This is not to deny the uniqueness of the "in Christ" concept to New Testament theology.<sup>1</sup> It simply allows Paul's use of the Old Testament which pervades his total theology to be determinative here.

It is possible to link this concept as well as the baptism with the reception of the Spirit (cf. Lk. 24:49). Since the ascension and glorification of Christ (cf. Jn. 7:39; Acts 2:33) and the day of Pentecost the Spirit is peculiarly the Spirit of Christ (cf. Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19).<sup>2</sup> This context, however, is purely forensic and positional, and according to Galatians 4:6 the Spirit comes logically as a result of, not to effect, the new position in Christ.

The form of the verb in Galatians 3:27 is the aorist middle indicative, second person plural. Since it is parallel with ἐβαπτίσθητε its action should be seen as simultaneous with baptism. The middle voice presents a difficulty

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Moule, The Phenomenon of the New Testament, p. 39. Moule uses the uniqueness of the "in Christ" concept as an apologetic for the veracity of the Christian faith.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 95.

if it is regarded as a direct middle: "You put Christ on yourselves." It may be a permissive middle<sup>1</sup> or simply be doing service for the passive, the form of which never does appear in the New Testament. Oepke notes: "The hardly serviceable passive aorist forms seem to have been replaced by the middle, and this is understandable in view of the fact that one usually dresses oneself."<sup>2</sup> (Cf. Lk. 24:49 for a similar use of the middle). The indicative mood reinforces the passive sense of the verb. The believers are told here not to put on Christ, as in Romans 13:14, but that they have gotten themselves clothed with Christ, so that they now stand in a position of being "in Christ."<sup>3</sup>

In summary, the sonship of verse 26 is accomplished by the action of baptism or induction into Christ, which is a forensic transference in which the believer participates at salvation. This process is more graphically described as having oneself clothed with Christ, which can only mean the imputation to the believer of all the relevant characteristics and redemptive values found in Christ.

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Robertson, Grammar, p. 808 for discussion.

<sup>2</sup>Oepke, "ἐνδύω," p. 320, n. 6.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Beasley-Murray, Baptism in the New Testament, p. 147, "Ethical conditions are not in view in this passage,"; Contra Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 110, who equates this usage with Rom. 13:14; Col. 3:10; Eph. 4:24.

### The Argument of the Immediate Context

Paul's argument is tightly woven from Galatians 3:15-4:7. Words such as promise, inheritance, and seed are interspersed throughout the entire section. The immediate context, however, may be limited to verses 23-29. The thrust of the argument is to demonstrate the mechanics of the dispensational shift from the minority stage of God's people under law to their majority stage as sons in Christ.

### Paul's Use of the First Person Plural

Paul's use of the first person plural in verbs and pronouns is quite significant, especially in certain sections of Galatians and Ephesians. In both it may be demonstrated that Paul at times speaks representatively of the Israelite people of God. This is especially true in Ephesians 1-2 (cf. Eph. 1:12-13 for an obvious example). In several verses preceding Galatians 3:27 this is also true and the representation carries back not just to the pre-Gentile but post-ascension establishment of the church, but to the era before Christ came into the world as Israel's Messiah. In verse 23 Paul speaks in the first person plural in reference to the time before the coming of Christ and the accompanying mature or fully revealed faith (cf. the particular τὴν πλῆσιν). He describes the law as a παιδαγωγός under which he along with all believing Israel functioned until the coming of Christ. In verse 25 this same group of which he is a part is no longer under the παιδαγωγός.

The same careful use of the first person plural may be seen in verse 13 (cf. Gal. 4:5), where it would be completely incongruous for Paul to use the second person plural when Gentiles never were under the Mosaic law.<sup>1</sup> That the redemption spoken of in Galatians 3:13 and 4:5 is a peculiarly Israelite redemption is emphasized by the pronoun ἐν prefixed to the verb ἀγοράζω.<sup>2</sup> It was the collective body of Israelite believers (with no historical limitations) that was redeemed out from the curse of the law at the time the redemptive work was accomplished by Christ (cf. Heb. 9:15).

The new position of God's people in their majority stage is described in verse 26. It is parallel to Ephesians 2:13ff and Paul naturally switches to the second person plural to bring into focus, not just Jews, but now Gentiles as well, of whom the recipients of his letter were largely comprised.

In this passage, therefore, Paul conceives of the people of God as a unit who undergo both a shift in position and a broadening in scope. He himself was part of Israel under the law and is now a partaker of the new benefits accompanying the arrival of the faith.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. John Eadie, A Commentary on the Greek Text of the Epistle of Paul to the Galatians (hereinafter referred to as Galatians) (reprint from 1884 ed.; Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, n. d.), p. 247.

<sup>2</sup>Eduard Schweizer, "Dying and Rising with Christ," New Testament Studies, 14:1 (October, 1967), 9, n. 1.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Rendall, "Galatians," p. 173.

### The Law as Παιδαγωγός

This minority stage under law is graphically pictured by Paul as a time when Israel was under the tutelage of a παιδαγωγός. The role of a παιδαγωγός in the earlier Greek world is described in some detail by Plato in Lysis. In discussing Lysis' parents Plato has Socrates ask:

Do they let you control your own self, or will they not trust you in that either? Of course they do not, he replied. But some one controls you? Yes, he said, my tutor (παιδαγωγός) here. Is he a slave? Why, certainly; he belongs to us, he said. What a strange thing, I exclaimed; a free man controlled by a slave (ἐλεύθερον ὄντα ὑπὸ δούλου ἄρχεσθαι). . . . Why do they maintain you all day long in constant servitude to somebody, so that, in a word, you do hardly a single thing that you desire? And thus, it would seem, you get no advantage from all your great possessions-- nay, anyone else controls them rather than you-- nor from your own person, though so well-born, which is also shepherded and managed by another; while you, Lysis, control nobody, and do nothing that you desire. It is because I am not yet of age, Socrates, he said.<sup>1</sup>

In Galatians Paul is using a metaphor to describe Israel's existence under the law, and though all points do not correspond, relevant aspects are noted in Plato's description which are reflected in Paul's παιδαγωγός passage. The theme is more graphically developed in Galatians 4:1-3, where even the concepts of servitude and the time of adulthood (προθεσμίας) are noted. The transference out of this minority stage, then, is dependent on mature sonship

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<sup>1</sup>Plato, "Lysis," in Vol. V of Plato, trans. by W. R. M. Lamb, in The Loeb Classical Library, ed. by E. Capps, et al. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), pp. 22-25.

and, according to Galatians 3:26-27, baptism into Christ describes the mechanics for effecting it.

### The Syntax of Galatians 3:26

This sonship, described in Galatians 4:5 as the adoption, or placement as sons (υιοθεσία), is declared of all believers now that the faith has come.<sup>1</sup> In verse 26, however, there is a syntactical question which bears heavily on verse 27. Does the prepositional phrase ἐν Χριστῷ 'Ἰησοῦ modify the verbal noun faith or the whole concept of sonship?

If the first is true, the expected preposition would normally be εἰς, though there are examples in the New Testament where ἐν introduces the object of faith (Col. 1:4; Eph. 1:15; 1 Tim. 1:14; 3:13; 2 Tim. 1:13; 3:15).<sup>2</sup> Several of these are disputable, however, and may indicate the position of the believer in Christ rather than the object of his faith. If the second view is accurate, the statement

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Francis Lyall, "Roman Law in the Writings of Paul--Adoption," Journal of Biblical Literature, 88:4 (December, 1969), 466, who demonstrates Paul's use of the Roman practice of adoption, which corresponds quite well with this context: "The adoptee is taken out of his previous state and is placed in a new relationship with his new paterfamilias. All his old debts are cancelled, and in effect he starts a new life."

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Eadie, Galatians, p. 285.

could read, as translated by Lightfoot, "You are sons by your union with, your existence in Christ Jesus."<sup>1</sup>

Though syntactically the first view is legitimate, in view of the position of the words and other similar constructions, the context clearly argues for the second view. There is a close connection between the prepositions ἐν and εἰς in verses 26 and 27. In preserving the directional and local sense of εἰς and the local sense of ἐν, Turner sums up the two verses by saying, "The Christian is 'in' Christ because he has already made the move 'into' Christ."<sup>2</sup> Best argues that the prepositional phrase in verse 27 should be interpreted by this preceding phrase.<sup>3</sup> Baptism into Christ is therefore again seen as the means by which the sonship is attained.

#### "In Christ" and the Corporate Christ

The concepts inherent to this discussion lead directly to the very prominent subject in Pauline theology of union with Christ or "being in Christ." Much of modern scholarship has seen this concept as central to Pauline

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<sup>1</sup>Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 149; cf. also Ernest De Witte Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*, in *The International Critical Commentary* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), p. 202; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, p. 105; Kent, *The Freedom of God's Sons*, p. 106, n. 3, all of whom prefer this view.

<sup>2</sup>Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1965), p. 157.

<sup>3</sup>Best, *One Body in Christ*, p. 70.

theology, in displacement of the Reformation emphasis on justification by faith. The "in Christ" concept is characterized as the New Age in reference to believers. Ladd writes, "The center of Pauline thought is the realization of the coming new age of redemption by the work of Christ."<sup>1</sup> In a work devoted to the subject, Stewart argues that "union with Christ, rather than justification or election or eschatology, or indeed any of the other great apostolic themes, is the real clue to an understanding of Paul's thought and experience."<sup>2</sup> Surely a study of Pauline literature will yield concurrence with this thought, though even justification is not ultimately in a theological category apart from union with Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:21).

What constitutes the essence of the concept has been the topic of not a few students of Paul. A brief survey taken from works by Longenecker and Best will highlight these efforts.<sup>3</sup> Deissmann's work on the phrase led him to emphasize the local aspect of *ἐν* but he equated the personal, resurrected Christ with the Spirit, so that believers are

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<sup>1</sup>George Eldon Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), p. 374.

<sup>2</sup>J. S. Stewart, A Man in Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1935), p. vii.

<sup>3</sup>Longenecker, Paul, pp. 161-70; Best, One Body in Christ, pp. 8-14.

said to be "in Christ" as if "in air."<sup>1</sup> Others regarded the idea as a carry-over from Hellenistic mystery religions, in which the initiate is absorbed into the divinity. Both of these views have been abandoned to some degree among more recent scholarship. According to many, Deissmann's view neglected the aspect of intimate relationship communicated by the phrase. It was too crudely local.

A very persuasive development in the twentieth century is to see in the phrase the concept of corporate personality, generally regarded as derived from the Old Testament and later Judaism.<sup>2</sup> It is popular in Roman Catholicism, since, if viewed too ecclesiastically, it argues for no salvation outside the organizational church. This viewpoint has also encouraged the concept that the church is presently the extension of the incarnation on earth.<sup>3</sup>

A less ecclesiastical but yet incorporational view is taught by a number of Protestant scholars. Both Longenecker and Best admit to this view but qualify it by drawing attention to the individual emphasis in certain passages: "While certainly the phrase has corporate overtones and social implications, it is used so often and in

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<sup>1</sup>Deissmann, Paul, p. 140.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. above, p. 33.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Manson, The Servant-Messiah, pp. 97-98.

such individualistic settings that it must be viewed as much more than just an extension of meaning from a more fundamental concept of corporeity."<sup>1</sup>

While numerous examples may be cited that are individualistic, this does not dictate against the corporate personality concept as lying at the base. If this concept is not delimited by an earthly ecclesiastical system but by the true people of God, then the concept may be retained and the solidarity of the human race as either in Adam or in Christ is surely behind it.

In retaining this concept, the headship of Christ and the direct relation of Christ to the individual must not be minimized. The believer's position in Christ therefore ought to be seen quite realistically and locally, but in a forensic and not a mystical sense. Through baptism into Christ the believer is in Christ and clothed with Christ, so that he partakes with Christ in all His accomplishments, possessions, and positions short of those aspects of redemption and position inherently limited to the God-Man. It effects the imputation of these benefits found in and achieved by Christ to the believer. In Him the believer is righteous (2 Cor. 5:21); his body of sin is potentially nullified (Rom. 6:6); he is of the seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), and therefore inherits the promise with the seed of

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<sup>1</sup>Longenecker, Paul, p. 169.

Abraham, Christ, (Gal. 3:19, 29; Rom. 8:17). He has a status as a son (Gal. 3:26) and even has the Spirit of Jesus, the Son of God. These and other benefits are the results of being transferred into Jesus Christ. The foundation for this new position was laid at the cross, and in Christ the individual joins other participants in a oneness or corporate relationship.<sup>1</sup>

This oneness is elaborated upon in verses 28 and 29. The individual relationship to Christ is not as marked in this passage as is the corporate relationship, which reflects the argument of the whole book. Because of the accomplishment of the cross a new age has come for believers; they are in their majority stage in Christ and therefore no longer under the pedagogy of the law. Without the law as the modus operandi, there is nothing to divide Jews from Gentiles or for that matter to hinder any categories of society from equal participation in the benefits of Christ.

Unless the forensic and soteriological nature of the new relationship is kept clearly in mind, extreme views will

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Best, One Body in Christ, pp. 17-18, quoting and translating Percy, Der Leib Christi, pp. 33f., who expresses it well, "The being of the believer in Christ means . . . his participation, understood quite realistically, in that which happened to Jesus on the cross and in the resurrection. . . . (It is) the unconditional presupposition for his very participation in the salvation accomplished in Christ. . . . Outside Christ the Old Age continues always to rule and in it the law, sin, judgment, and death govern despite what happened in Christ. They are overcome only in Christ; . . . (Rom. 8:1). Only in him does the blessing of Abraham come upon the Gentiles (Gal. 3:14), and indeed upon the Jews as well."

emerge from verse 28. One author, in support of the ordination of women, argues that Paul is here laying the ground for an eventual elimination of all distinctions, racial, economic, and sexual, within the church.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the equality consists in, according to this verse it is present at the time of writing and not something that would develop. Best tries to distinguish class and race from social functions, the first of which are abolished, whereas the second, being a part of the fabric of society, continue.<sup>2</sup> The sense must be gained from the context, in which the emphasis again is on the transference of believers into Christ. Surely racial, class, and sexual distinctions continue in a functional sense (cf. Rom. 11:1), but in the new stage there are no delimitations in the participation in the benefits imputed to the one baptized into and clothed with Christ. In this context, all are sons of God and on equal redemptive ground because of their incorporation into Christ. It has nothing whatever to do with function in society or within the church.

The corporate personality inherent to the unity of God's people is emphatically described in verse 28. The masculine εἶς, as Guthrie notes, should be given its full

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<sup>1</sup>T. R. W. Longstaff, "The Ordination of Women: A Biblical Perspective," Anglican Theological Review, 57:3 (July, 1975), 325.

<sup>2</sup>Best, One Body in Christ, pp. 27-28.

force, "for the idea is not of a unified organization, but of a unified personality."<sup>1</sup> Lightfoot paraphrases it as "one man" and finds a proper parallel in Ephesians 2:15.<sup>2</sup>

The corporate sense of this unity is also emphasized in verse 29, where Paul draws some extremely significant conclusions relevant to his total argument. The genitive  $\chi\rho\iota\sigma\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is difficult to designate, though it surely goes beyond relationship or possession. In this context it is a variation of the "in Christ" formula to which it stands nearly in juxtaposition, emphasizing the closest possible identity of believers with Christ.<sup>3</sup>

It is by this identity of believers with Christ, effected by the forensic baptism into Christ, that Paul draws his historical argument to a close. He has already in verses 16 and 19 insisted that Jesus Christ Himself is the ultimate seed promised to Abraham and therefore the heir of the promises.<sup>4</sup> Since believers are incorporated into Christ,

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<sup>1</sup>Donald Guthrie, Galatians, in The Century Bible (Greenwood, SC: The Attic Press, 1969), p. 116; cf. also C. A. A. Scott, Christianity According to St. Paul (Cambridge: The University Press, 1927), pp. 155-56.

<sup>2</sup>Lightfoot, Galatians, p. 150.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 150-51, "The argument turns on the entire identity of the Christian brotherhood with Christ."

<sup>4</sup>Cf. Findlay, The Epistle to the Galatians, pp. 206-07, "The true seed of Abraham was in the first instance one, not many. In the primary realization of the Promise, typical of its final accomplishment, it received a singular interpretation; it concentrated itself on the one, spiritual offspring, putting aside the many, natural and heterogeneous

in that very act they become a part of the seed of Abraham as well and therefore become heirs of the promises along with Christ.<sup>1</sup> The over-all contextual effect of baptism into Christ is the inclusion of Gentile believers in the blessings of the Abrahamic Covenant along with Jewish believers. This is the very essence of the mystery unfolded in Ephesians 3, with its foundation in the cross work of Jesus Christ.

#### The Argument of the Wider Context

In the salvation history outlined in Galatians 3 and 4, Paul adumbrates two distinct stages in that history, that which preceded the fulness of time, and that which consists of the fulness of time (cf. Gal. 4:4). A proper understanding of the mechanics involved in the transition from one to the other would give the Galatians the reason why Gentile believers did not have to come under the law, and, in fact, why Jewish believers were now liberated from the law.

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(Hagarite and Keturite) descendants. And this sifting principle, this law of election which singles out from the varieties of nature the Divine type, comes into play all along the line of descent. . . . It finds its supreme expression in the person of Christ."

<sup>1</sup>Cf. Earle E. Ellis, Paul's Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), p. 72, "It was to the faith seed that the promises belonged, and this class was determined not by physical descent but by faith-union with Messiah."

### Before the Fulness of Time

Paul dwells on the era before the arrival of Christ in Galatians 3:6-25 and further illustrates it in 4:1-3, though several times he moves to the post-cross period (cf. Gal. 3:13-14). The period is regarded as beginning with Abraham, though in a parallel passage he does advert to Adam (Rom. 5:12ff). In Galatians, however, it is primarily the distinguishing of the Abrahamic Covenant and its perpetual nature from the Mosaic law and its temporary character. Some of the features already revealed and even to a degree in effect in connection with the instituting of the Abrahamic Covenant were: justification by faith (Gal. 3:6), the promise of blessing to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:8), the promise of an elect, sovereignly given seed for whom an inheritance was intended (Gal. 3:16-19), and the unconditional nature of the inheritance inasmuch as it was based on a promise and not on legal efforts (Gal. 3:17-18).

The fulfillment of this covenant, however, was delayed and in His own purposes God instituted the Mosaic economy, designed ultimately as a period of education in the issues of soteriology. The law was added to both curb and highlight sin (Gal. 3:19), and served to direct men to focus their faith, not in their own works, but in the promise offered in the Abrahamic Covenant, which is historically finally realized in the person of Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:22).

Therefore, while Israelites (true spiritual Israel)

believed in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, functionally they were under the law as a "contractual obligation."<sup>1</sup> In this period the people of God, though justified (proleptically on the basis of a future redemption, cf. Heb. 9:15) and partakers of the Abrahamic Covenant blessing, were in a minority stage and described by Paul as babes under the elementary principles (Gal. 4:3). Though heirs of all, they had not as yet entered the time or position of maturity and sonship.

#### In the Fulness of Time

The new era is discussed by Paul in Galatians 3:13, 14, 26-29; 4:4-7. Its arrival was determined solely by the Father (Gal. 4:2),<sup>2</sup> and was inaugurated initially by the incarnation of the Son of God (Gal. 4:4), though the soteriological effects depended entirely on the cross work of Christ (Gal. 3:13; 4:5). Those effects in Galatians included the redemption of believing Jews out from under the law as a curse and a modus operandi (Gal. 3:13, 25; 4:5); reception of a position as sons (Gal. 3:26; 4:5,6); inclusion of the Gentiles in the corporate seed of Abraham headed by Christ and therefore becoming co-heirs with believing Israel and

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Longenecker, Paul, p. 125, for an excellent discussion of the relationship of faith and law under the Mosaic economy.

<sup>2</sup>προθεσμία--a "common legal term" referring to a "previously appointed day," often in reference to the full repayment of a loan, Moulton and Milligan, Vocabulary, p. 540.

Christ (Gal. 3:27-29); and the common reception of the Spirit of God's Son as a first-fruit of the eschatological promises of the Abrahamic Covenant (Gal. 3:14; 4:6). Though the New Covenant is not mentioned in this context, this is undoubtedly under discussion, as Sauer explains, "The 'new covenant' is the continuation and glorious perfection of the covenant with Abraham (Gal. 3:9, 14; Rom. 5)." <sup>1</sup>

### Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that the concept of baptism into Christ in Galatians 3:27 is at the very center of Paul's argument in Galatians as the action by which believers are transferred out of a minority stage into the majority stage which consists of being "in Christ." Historically baptism into Christ has generally been interpreted as a reference to water baptism, while dispensational authors and a few others regard it as equal to the Spirit baptism described in 1 Corinthians 12:13.

An examination of the language and grammar of both baptism into Christ and the concept of being clothed with Christ led to a metaphorical and forensic view of baptism which relates to the legal position of the believer in God's salvation program. Its close relationship to the "in Christ" concept, sonship, the soteriological unity of all

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<sup>1</sup>Erich Sauer, The Dawn of World Redemption (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 97.

believers, and the corporate seed of Abraham in both the preceding and succeeding verses underscores its importance in understanding the transition from the old stage to the new and the overall argument of the book of Galatians.

In Christ the law has no more jurisdiction and its "contractual obligation" is ended. The babe has become lord of all in Christ, his Lord. If a sacramental view of baptism, or even a weaker "dynamic" baptism is true, Paul would surely have emphasized water baptism in his preaching in Acts and his epistles. Instead, he denies this very thing (1 Cor. 1:17). If the metaphorical and forensic view is correct, God is honored as the executor of the baptism and salvation remains all of grace (1 Cor. 1:30).

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PAULINE THEOLOGY OF BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

Baptism into Christ is related to differing soteriological emphases in the several passages in which it is found in Pauline literature. In every occurrence, however, the metaphorical and forensic view explains the language most adequately. This is true even in the use of the noun, as in Romans 6:4, Ephesians 4:5, and Colossians 2:12.<sup>1</sup>

#### Romans 6:1-4

As the most definitive of the doctrine of baptism into Christ, this passage relates it entirely to the crucifixion of Christ. In the context of Romans 5:12ff. the connection between Christ and Adam and the solidarity of the human race in Adam is explicitly taught. In contrast to Galatians 3:27, this passage looks back historically beyond the Abrahamic Covenant to the original head of the human race, describing the effects of the original sin on the

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<sup>1</sup>Contra Dunn, Baptism in The Holy Spirit, pp. 140, 157, who consistently argues for a metaphorical use of the verb, but reverses to a sacramental view when the noun is used, as in Rom. 6:4 and Col. 2:12. He does, of course, regard Mark 10:38 and Luke 12:50 as metaphorical (cf. p. 227).

race. In Adam men are constituted sinners and under condemnation. With the cross work of Christ as the foundation, the believer who receives the gift of justification is transferred out of one legal position in Adam into a new legal position in Christ.

In this transference the cross work and resurrection are forensically applied to the believer. If "baptism" in the following quote is understood metaphorically, the statement by Oepke summarizes succinctly the essence of Romans 5 and 6: "The first and the second Adam . . . are progenitors of two races of men . . . . By baptism . . . believers are removed from the sphere of the first Adam, which is that of sin and death, into the sphere of the second Adam, which is that of righteousness and life."<sup>1</sup>

The personal and historical relationships of this baptism are identified in Romans 6. Undoubtedly the individual's transference into Christ takes place at the moment of faith, or of receiving the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17). Since the event with which this baptism is related in the text is not the outpouring of the Spirit (Pentecost) but the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, baptism into Christ relates the believer to the latter historical

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<sup>1</sup>Albrecht Oepke, "ἐν," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. II, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), p. 542.

event.<sup>1</sup>

Spirit baptism, however, cannot be divorced from this doctrine, since it is explicitly stated in 1 Corinthians 12:13 that the common reception of the Spirit argues for the unity of the body of Christ. While both baptisms are metaphorical, it is demonstrable from Galatians that logically baptism into Christ precedes the reception of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 3:26ff., especially 4:6). Therefore, since the time of the outpouring of the Spirit (Acts 2:33) it is impossible to conceive of being baptized into Christ without being baptized in the Spirit resulting in its common possession in the body of Christ. The first, however, is basic and mainly soteriological, while the second is an effect and experiential. Also, while baptism into Christ relates the believer to Christ and His death, burial, and resurrection in a forensic manner, the Spirit, who is called the Spirit of Christ or His Son,<sup>2</sup> is the agent who makes the forensic relationship applicable to the believer's life.

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<sup>1</sup>Though the Gospel references to baptism as a description of the anticipated cross work (Mk. 19:38; Lk. 12:50) also bring the two concepts together, here the experiential sufferings resulting from identification with Christ in the world are primarily in view.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Dunn, Baptism in the Holy Spirit, p. 95, "Christ indwells the believer in and by His Spirit. . . . For the Spirit from the ascension onwards is peculiarly the Spirit of Jesus (Acts 16:7; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19). What we receive at conversion is the Spirit and life of the risen exalted Christ."

Colossians 2:12

Baptism is highly individual at this point in the argument of Colossians also, and again it clearly relates to the death and resurrection of Christ. Unless water baptism is read into the verse, necessitating a sacramental view of baptism, the baptism must refer to the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Though in this context again the Spirit is not mentioned, it may be assumed that He is the experiential agent applying Christ's accomplishments to the lives of believers (cf. Col. 2:12 with Rom. 2:29).

Ephesians 4:4

"One baptism" in Ephesians 4:4 lies in the midst of six other truths, all characteristic of the post-crucifixion salvation program. The emphasis up to this point in Ephesians has been on the effects of the cross work on the legal division between Jews and Gentiles. In short, the division was abolished (cf. Eph. 2:13-16). Now Gentiles are partakers in the spiritual blessings of Israel's inheritance and covenants of promise (Eph. 3:6). They have already received the common gift of the Holy Spirit as the pledge of a future inheritance (Eph. 1:13-14).

After a doctrinal treatise on this subject of the Jew-Gentile unity effected by the cross, Paul turns to practical matters in Ephesians 4. His plea is for practical

unity and harmony between Jews and Gentiles. A series of doctrinal truths are then succinctly adduced to remind the believers of the foundations for this unity. Along with other major factors are included the words "one baptism." Since Paul is not a sacramentalist and has at other places used baptism in a metaphorical sense (as understood in this paper), and since the preceding context argues strongly for a similar view, this baptism should also be regarded as the forensic incorporation of the believers into Christ. The common oneness in Christ noted in Galatians 3:28 is here again asserted as a compelling reason for mutual acceptance of one another within the church.

#### Summary

From this survey of Paul's theology of baptism into Christ, several principles emerge that relate as well to the "in Christ" concept. First, it is the description given to the transference out of the natural solidarity in Adam into the new solidarity in Christ, the second Adam. Secondly, it relates the individual to the cross work of Christ so as to effect in a forensic sense the death of the body of sin possessed in Adam, as well as to provide the basis of the future resurrection. Thirdly, it installs believers in a mature legal position in God's soteriological program as sons. Fourthly, it is the legal basis for the experiential reception of the Spirit and therefore closely related to

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Spirit baptism. And finally, it effects a corporate unity in which there are no soteriological distinctions between classes of people and on the basis of which the Spirit of God experientially manifests the unity of believers in Christ.

## CHAPTER V

### THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF BAPTISM INTO CHRIST

One of the underlying motivations for this study in the book of Galatians was to discover the inter-dispensational relationships of the people of God. While one school of theology equates the present church with Israel of the Old Testament and goes so far as to call the Jew-Gentile church "spiritual Israel,"<sup>1</sup> another draws a sharp organic and eternal distinction between believers of the Pentecost to pre-tribulational rapture period and all others, including Old Testament saints.<sup>2</sup>

In connection with the second school, the doctrine of baptism into Christ is very crucial since the dispensational school almost invariably defines it as Spirit baptism and therefore limited to the Pentecost-rapture period.<sup>3</sup> This chapter will explore several problems in this definition

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<sup>1</sup>Cf. Herman Ridderbos, Paul, An Outline of His Theology, trans. by John Richard De Witt (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975), pp. 354ff.

<sup>2</sup>Cf. Charles Caldwell Ryrie, Dispensationalism Today (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), pp. 132ff.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Chafer, Pneumatology, pp. 143-44.

and delimitation and seek to present a view which seems more in keeping with the scriptural data. The issues will be discussed under two headings, but both relate primarily to the concept of baptism into Christ and being in Christ.

### The Seed of Abraham and Inheritance

The first question that presents itself from a dispensational standpoint is whether Old Testament saints are participants in the baptism into Christ, which would effect their being "in Christ." The Galatian passage under discussion strongly intimates that they are, especially in its teaching on inheritance.

The Abrahamic Covenant promised certain things to Abraham and his seed, and though there was an initial fulfillment of the land promise (cf. Joshua 21:43-45), this did not exhaust the blessings of the Covenant. In fact, in an unqualified manner Paul insists in Galatians 3:16 that the promises were ultimately intended for the Messiah, (cf. Gal. 3:19). Christ Himself is the seed of Abraham and heir of the promises.

Paul also presents the concept of Christ as a corporate personality, comprised of all those who by faith have been baptized into Christ. In this closest possible identification with Christ, believers also are the seed of Abraham, installed as sons, and therefore legitimate co-heirs with

Christ (Gal. 3:29).<sup>1</sup> Though believers anticipate a full inheritance in the kingdom of God, since Pentecost the pledge of the inheritance has already been received in the Holy Spirit (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:14).

The inheritance of the kingdom, however, is not limited in the New Testament to believers living on earth at some time since Pentecost. Passages such as Matthew 8:11; Romans 4:13; Hebrews 11:10, 16; Revelation 21:3-4; 9-14 clearly teach that Abraham anticipated inheriting the future heavenly kingdom. The strong implication in Galatians, however, is that only those "in Christ" as sons are co-heirs with Christ. The conclusion must be that in some manner Old Testament saints are "in Christ" as well.

The answer to this problem is in the forensic nature of baptism into Christ. As Galatians 3 is studied Paul never presents any organic break in the unity of the people of God between the Old and New Testament periods. His use of the first person plural in reference to Israel under the law implies this organic unity. There is simply a shift from a minority to a majority stage resulting from an accomplished redemption on the cross. In the same manner

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<sup>1</sup>Werner Foerster, "κληρόνομος," Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. III, ed. by Gerhard Kittel, trans. and ed. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1965), p. 782, "Sonship is the basis of inheritance. . . . If Christ as Son is heir, His people as those set in sonship are συγκληρονόμοι."

that Old Testament believers awaited the time of this objectively accomplished work for their own realized redemption, they also awaited the fulness of time for their incorporation into Christ.

Although the Bible seldom enters into abstract issues of chronology in relation to soteriology, Hebrews 9:15 brings the ideas under discussion very close together. It is because of the accomplished redemption that Old Testament believers are in a position to receive the eternal inheritance. That position is defined in Galatians as being "in Christ," effected by baptism into Christ.

The time at which this transference to the majority stage took place for dead Old Testament saints is not clearly stated in the Bible. As already seen, forensic baptism into Christ relates believers in the present era to the work of Christ on the cross as well as the resurrection, ascension, and glorification (cf. Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1). Though the time element is not really crucial, the transference must have at least resulted from and been closely related to the actual accomplishments just noted.

A suggestion to this problem involves the nature of Abraham's bosom in Luke 16:22-31 and the enigmatic Old Testament reference in Ephesians 4:8. If Abraham's bosom was a place other than in the immediate presence of God, it may be that in Christ's ascension He led Old Testament saints out of this place into the presence of God (Eph. 2:16;

Heb. 10:19f). In this identification with Christ they are "in Christ" just as any dead believer of the present day is still "in Christ" and they anticipate their future inheritance along with all saints as co-heirs with Christ.

#### Baptism into Christ and 1 Corinthians 12:13

The dispensational interpretation of Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 is identical with the forensic and positional interpretation of baptism into Christ presented in this paper. A very difficult problem immediately emerges, therefore, if Old Testament saints are regarded as participants in the baptism into Christ, for the dispensational view limits the human participation of this baptism to the Pentecost-rapture era.

The answer to the problem is in a reinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:13 from a functional rather than a dispensationally unique standpoint. In Acts there is the closest possible connection between the promise of Spirit baptism in Acts 1:5 and the pouring forth (Acts 2:17, 33), receiving the gift (Acts 2:38), and the falling upon (Acts 10:44) of the Holy Spirit. Peter especially links the idea together in Acts 11:15-17, where he regards the Spirit's falling upon the believer, baptism in the Spirit, and God's giving the Spirit as synonymous.

Spirit baptism in 1 Corinthians 12:13 must be speaking of the same bestowment of the Spirit for linguistic and

contextual reasons. Linguistically the language is precisely the same (ἐν πνεύματι). Though Ryrie regards the preposition ἐν as instrumental in both,<sup>1</sup> the Bible always presents Christ as the baptizer, not the Holy Spirit. The ἐν is actually pointing to the element in which this baptism occurs.<sup>2</sup> There is really no difference between receiving the Spirit and being baptized in the Spirit. This view is also confirmed from the context of 1 Corinthians 12. The emphasis is not on a legal position but a common participation in the Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 12:13b). This common possession experientially unites believers together in one historically functioning body.

This does not mean that the foundation of the universal body is Spirit baptism. In Galatians 3:26-4:6 it is clearly taught that the sending forth of the Spirit of God's Son is logically based on the forensic baptism into Christ which effects sonship. The identity of being in Christ and in the body of Christ is intimated in Galatians 3:28 (ἐἴς) as well as in the corporate personality of the seed of Abraham. It is explicitly equated in Romans 12:5. Therefore, while Spirit baptism is not the foundation of the church, since Pentecost it is contemporaneous with baptism

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<sup>1</sup>Charles Caldwell Ryrie, The Holy Spirit (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), p. 78.

<sup>2</sup>Leon Morris, The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, ed. by R. V. G. Tasker (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1958), p. 174.

into Christ at the point of faith in Christ and applies the believers' forensic position to their experience on earth (cf. "Abba, Father!" Gal. 4:6b).

On the basis of this conclusion, there is no reason why Old Testament saints are not included in the universal body of Christ along with all dead and living New Testament saints. Darby, in speaking of the believers' enjoyment of glory with Christ as the "Head and source of a new spiritual race," notes that "Old Testament believers will, without doubt, enjoy the glory, partaking in the result of the redemption wrought by Christ, although they formed no part of His body upon earth, for the thing itself was not come" (emphasis added).<sup>1</sup> This does not deny that when that work was accomplished, which reconciled things in heaven and on earth in one body to God (Col. 1:20; Eph. 2:16), Old Testament believers were included in that one body. Their entry into the body is identical with their entry into Christ, discussed in the preceding section.

### Conclusion

An important distinction must be maintained in these conclusions between God's functional programs on earth, which are dispensationally distinct, and the soteriological unity of all saved. God has an earthly kingdom program

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<sup>1</sup>John V. Darby, The Collected Writings of J. N. Darby, Vol. XXXIV, ed. by William Kelly (St. Leonards-on-the-Sea, Sussex: Bible Depot, 1967), p. 82.

which is presently in abeyance functionally while He is concentrating on the Gentiles in the present church age (Rom. 11:25-27). In the future He will again reinstate the kingdom program in which Israel will be the center of concentration, though in neither the church age nor the future kingdom are Jews and Gentiles excluded. Throughout these programs, however, there is an organic unity of believers in Christ based on His cross work, which abolished forever any soteriological divisions between the two (Eph. 2:15).

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The thesis of this paper was to demonstrate that the Pauline doctrine of baptism into Christ in Galatians, if understood correctly, provides crucial answers to the problem of the dispensational shift from a Judaistic to a universal redemptive program. In essence, baptism into Christ describes the forensic transference of God's people out of their minority stage under law into their majority stage as sons. Historically the ground for this transference is based on the redemptive work of Christ, so that since the accomplishment of that work, God's people, being redeemed from the curse of the law, are no longer under law as a modus operandi. Therefore, there are no ethnological or other limitations in participating in this transference into Christ. There is corporate unity in Christ. Baptism into Christ plants its participants firmly in the soteriological blessings and inheritance of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Since this is a forensic transference necessary for inheritance and not equated with Spirit baptism, it was concluded that Old Testament saints must be included in the position of being in Christ, which is equal to participation in the body of Christ. While there are functional distinctions in God's programs, on the basis of the cross work and

transference into Christ there is a soteriological and trans-dispensational unity of God's people.

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