

# For the Life of the World

## Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

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### **The Baptismal Life**

By Arthur A. Just Jr.

### **Baptism Is Not Simple Water Only**

By David P. Scaer

### **Dr. Luther on the Pattern of Holy Baptism: Like Children Dying and Rising in Christ**

By Travis J. Loeslie



# CONTENTS

Volume Seventeen, Number Two



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## FEATURES

### 4 The Baptismal Life

By Arthur A. Just Jr.

The baptismal life is a journey to full communion with Christ in heaven, a life lived under the cross, a life lived in Christ, hearing His holy Word and feeding upon the holy food of His body and blood that sustains us on our journey. The baptismal life is lived around a table where the same Christ, who united Himself to us by giving birth to us in a watery grave now feeds us the holy food of His very body and blood.

### 7 Baptism Is Not Simple Water Only

By David P. Scaer

Baptism is the continuation of how God gave life to creation through water, but now in this sacrament He gives life to sinners trapped in death. Just as the water at the Creation was the means out of which the earth arose, the water of Baptism has become the means of grace in creating and sustaining faith. In water, creation arose and in the water of Baptism the Church, God's creation, was born.

### 9 Dr. Luther on the Pattern of Holy Baptism: Like Children Dying and Rising in Christ

By Travis J. Loeslie

For Luther, the point is not that infants have faith. God creates faith where and when He pleases. The Church has never baptized on the basis of faith. We baptize because Jesus said so. Luther's Anabaptist opponents cannot prove that infants do not have faith. Infant faith is a great and precious mystery of God's handiwork. It is not on display for man to judge if it is there or not. Of course, infants may believe! When God speaks, it is so, whether He is speaking creation into existence, raising Jesus from His Easter tomb or giving faith to an infant in Baptism.

### Also in this issue:

- What Does This Mean? . . . . . p. 11**
- Seminary Announces Spring Placements. . . p. 12**
- Masaki Visits Russia and Japan . . . . . p. 18**
- CTS Marks Completion of 167th Academic Year . . . . . p. 22**
- Military Project: LCMS Chaplains Serving God and Country. . . . . p. 25**
- Profiles in Giving . . . . . p. 28**
- Bible Study: God's Promises in Baptism . . . p. 30**

# Baptism Is Not Simple Water Only

By David P. Scaer

Everyone brought up on the old Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod catechism learned the words, “Baptism is not simple water only, but it is the water comprehended in God’s command and connected with God’s word.” The newer version in the *Lutheran Service Book (LSB)* offers something similar: “Baptism is not plain water, . . .”

Water in whatever form it exists is never plain, simple or ordinary. Ask anyone who is not allowed to drink anything in the 12 hours before an ordinary medical procedure. Deprived of water for a few hours and the only thought is when will we get the next drink of water. Children at play need water. To perform athletes must keep themselves hydrated. Water is what life is all about. Water is life. People on the East Coast whose homes were ruined in November by the ocean swell or carried out to sea also have a few thoughts about how deadly water can be. Rivers overflowing their banks wreak havoc.

Water has its origin in the Creation. Genesis says after God separated the light from darkness, He created water in which He then encased the earth so that above it was the earth’s canopy and below its foundation. Like the water of Baptism, the water out of which the world was created was included in God’s word and connected with His command. He spoke the word and water was commanded into existence. Life so depends upon water that the words water and life are virtually synonyms. Finding water on the moon and the planets of our solar system holds out the possibility of extraterrestrial life, so some scientists hypothesize. Baptism is the continuation of how God gave life to creation through water, but now in this sacrament He gives life to sinners trapped in death.

Just as the water at the Creation was the means out of which the earth arose, the water of Baptism has become the means of grace in creating and sustaining faith. In water, creation arose and in the water of Baptism the Church, God’s creation, was born. Baptism comes with the promise that the new creation to which it gives birth will be raised to a level higher than the one found in the Creation.

Ironically, water that is synonymous with life can spell destruction and disaster. Water that brought life to creation would also bring death. All things God created good fell under His curse so that even the water that sustained the world’s life, and without which life was impossible, brought death through the Flood and destroyed all life on earth. That worldwide flood lifted up the ark and rescued Noah, his family and all creation. From these survivors God renewed His world.

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*The Rev. Brian Noack (CTS 2004), St. John’s Ev. Lutheran Church, Sayville, N.Y., baptizes Isaac Koontz.*

*Bottom: Sem. Aaron Uphoff (CTS 2014) with Isaac, Jennifer Koontz with Christian and Vicar Adam Koontz (CTS 2014) with Lydia on Isaac’s Baptism day.*



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**Baptism is a Christian sacrament established by Christ and given to His Church to entomb our sin in His grave and to raise us to a new life in His resurrection. In Baptism God did something new, but He did it by using His creative word and the water out of which the world came. By making Baptism a water of redemption, He had it as a water of creation and so His original purpose in creation was restored.**

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Out of water God called forth a perfect creation, and by water He promises to restore what was made imperfect by sin and raise it to a higher level than the original creation. In Baptism we find the hope of a new heaven and new earth in which God and man live in perfect harmony. By calling forth the world from water, God spoke His creative word, and in restoring the fallen world, He spoke a word that redeemed, restored and created and the word He spoke was Christ Himself. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made (John 1:3).

Through Him all things in heaven and earth are created, redeemed and restored. Water that was the source of all life has become the source of the life that is given by the word of God in Baptism. Out of the baptismal font a new humanity emerges as the Church, a theme included in the well-known hymn “The Church’s One Foundation” in verse 1: “She is His new creation by water and the Word” (*LSB*, 644). By Baptism Christ engrafts the Church into Himself, so that its water is not only a life-creating and sustaining element for all of creation, but also a redemptive and restorative water. And the word that is found in, with and under the water of Baptism is not merely vocables by Christ Himself. In Baptism Christ speaks the word and by His word the baptized is drawn into the life of the Trinity, and the Trinity comes to live in the baptized believer. So is fulfilled the promise of Jesus that He and His Father will come and live with believers. Baptism engrafts

believers into Christ and He is engrafted into them. Christ Himself is the word by which God commanded the world to come out of nothing, and He is the word by which Church is born in Baptism. Peter spoke of how the world was made from water, “by the word of God heavens existed long ago, and an earth formed out of water and by means of water” (2 Peter 3:5). It almost sounds as if the apostle were speaking about Baptism, but as these words stand, they resemble Luther’s explanation of the First Article that God creates and preserves me and all creatures.

Those who do not believe in God can hardly believe that He is the Creator. Denial of God does not allow for belief in Him as Creator. Unbelievers are likely to be unconcerned about how the world originated. If they have any thoughts about this at all, they are more likely to see it as a self-contained mechanism without beginning or end. Or they may see creation only as a collection



*The Rev. John Flamme (CTS 1992), with Brian (CTS 2013) and Jennifer Flamme for the Baptism of his grandson, Jason, at Concordia Lutheran Church, Greenwood, Ind.*

of random acts without any rhyme or reason. Some Christians may have a bifurcated view regarding Baptism as the foundation of faith, but have no firm beliefs of how the world came into existence. In the 18th century this belief was known as deism. God had created the world but then left it on its own. Theistic evolution, the belief that God created the first forms of life from which ever more complex forms emerged, fits nicely into a deistic view of reality. In the 21st century, secular man has become

sufficiently sophisticated that he has removed God from the equation. If some cannot go as far as saying that they have created themselves, they will find the question of who created unimportant.

Man was tasked with caring for creation, and so Christians do their part in preserving it. Concern for the earth is called environmentalism, but this word is used properly for a movement whose ideology eliminates God from the equation of preserving the world. Putting God to the side in how the world was created can be viewed as a functional agnosticism, since He is eliminated from the world’s future. Man may not be acknowledged as the world’s creator, but he has come to think that he can determine what the world will be. This is secularism at its best. Secular comes from the Latin word for world, and for those apart from the world there is no reality. It can also be viewed as a modern paganism since the creation takes on a personality such as Mother Earth. Feminist ideology has no place for God the Father Almighty, who alone is maker of heaven and earth. Christianity sees things differently. The world is not self-originating or self-contained, but it was created and is still sustained by God, who has revealed Himself as the Father through His only Son, Jesus Christ.

Baptism is a Christian sacrament established by Christ and given to His Church to entomb our sin in His grave and to raise us to a new life in His resurrection. In Baptism God did something new, but He did it by using His creative word and the water out of which the world came. By making Baptism a water of redemption, He had it as a water of creation and so His original purpose in creation was restored. So we go back to the beginning of this essay, “Baptism is not plain water” and water by itself is never ordinary. By water He sustains the world and brings destruction and through it, in Baptism, He brings salvation. 🚩

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