

AGREED STATEMENT ON BAPTISM

1977

1. THE NATURE OF BAPTISM

Baptism is a sacrament of the church, instituted by Christ.

It is administered with water in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, in obedience to Christ's command (Matt.28:19).

This sacrament incorporates the baptised into the Body of Christ, which is the church, and cannot be repeated.

2. THE EFFECTS OF BAPTISM

The church celebrates the sacrament of baptism with trust in the divine promise of eternal salvation (Mark 16:16) and in the conviction that it gives what is promised.

It grants birth to a new life, forgiveness of sins both original and actual, and the gift of the Spirit (John 3:3-6; Acts2:38).

Through the gift of the Spirit and of grace, the baptised are immersed in the saving events of the sacrificial death and the resurrection of Christ (Eph.2:5-6; Rom. 6:3-6; Col.2:12; Col.3:3.)

Baptism destroys the Old Adam in the believer and creates in him the New Adam, so that he is a new creature (Col.3:10; Eph.4:22-24) conformed to the likeness of Christ (Rom.8:29).

By membership in the body of Christ the believer is enabled in faith to participate even now in the threefold office of Christ as prophet, priest and king (1 Pet.2:9; 2 Tim.2:11-12; Col.1:12-13; Eph.1:14).

3. NECESSITY OF BAPTISM

God, our Saviour, wills that all should come to salvation and the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim.2-4).

Since baptism is necessary to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5; Mark 16:16), the baptism of both infants and adults is necessary for their salvation (Acts2:38-39).

4 BAPTISM AND FAITH

Baptism calls forth faith in the triune God (Mark 16:16).

This faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit, and includes the acknowledgement of, and a firm trust in, the saving promises of God which are offered in the sacrament.

The validity of the sacrament does not depend on the faith of the one who administers it; nor does it lose its validity if subsequently in unbelief the recipient rejects its grace and benefits; but faith is essential for the salutary reception of baptism.

Since in faith the believer is implanted into the Body of Christ, he or she has a rightful claim upon the pastoral ministrations of the Church for growth in the knowledge and love of the Lord (Eph. 4:11-13; Eph.2:21). Dead to sin, but alive in the Spirit, the baptised lives the Christian life, striving to show forth daily, throughout the whole of life, the new image given in baptism, to die to sin and put to death the Old Adam by repentance (Col,3:10). This life is lived in the strength of the merits of Christ, the source of salvation, the free gift of God (Gal. 5:24; Rom.6:3-6).

5. THE RITE OF BAPTISM

Each church approves of the manner in which the rite of baptism is celebrated in the other communion.

Before their baptism adults should be fully instructed. In the case of the baptism of infants, parents, relatives and god-parents should be given adequate preparation for their part in the rite and for the fulfilment of their obligations after the child is baptised and committed to their care.

The sacrament is administered by the celebrant applying water to the person being baptised, and at the same time saying "I baptise you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit". The use of water and of the Trinitarian formula is essential for the validity of the sacrament.

As baptism is a sacrament of the Church, the local congregation should be actively involved in the celebration of baptism. Because of this, the baptismal rite is best celebrated during the Sunday liturgy. In case of emergency baptism may be administered by anyone provided it is performed with the intention of administering the Christian rite.

6. CONCLUSION

We give thanks to the Lord for the gift of baptism from our Saviour Jesus Christ, and rejoice that there is a basic agreement between our churches on the doctrine of Christian baptism.

While this agreement on essential teachings concerning baptism does exist, there are differences in interpretation and understanding which require further dialogue.

We see the agreement which has been discovered in the dialogue as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

This encourages us to continue a hopeful study of the differences which still exist, trusting in the continued help of the same Holy Spirit of love and unity.

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