

These Living Waters: Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism
A Report of the Catholic Reformed Dialogue in United States
2003 - 2007

Table of Contents

1. Introduction
2. Common Agreement on Mutual Recognition of Baptism
3. Historical overview: sacraments and sacramentality
 - a. Sacramentality
 - i. Roman Catholic view
 - ii. Reformed view
 - b. Sacraments
 - i. Roman Catholic view
 - ii. Reformed view
 - c. Summary
4. Baptismal rites
 - a. Our Common Early History
 - b. Historical Developments: The Reformation
 - c. Historical Developments: Roman Catholic
 - d. [comparative chart of pre and post-Tridentine Baptismal Rites – appendix?]
 - e. Development of Baptismal Rite after the Reformation
 - i. Reformed
 - ii. Roman Catholic
 - f. Twentieth Century Convergence in Scholarship and Ritual
 - i. Reformed
 - ii. Roman Catholic
 - g. Critical Comparison of Roman Catholic and Reformed Rites
 - h. Conclusion: Similar Rites with Different Hermeneutics
5. Theology of Baptism: Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Common Perspectives
 - a. What is baptism?
 - b. Why does the church baptize?
 - c. What does Baptism effect or signify?
 - d. How is Christian Baptism related to the Biblical Economy of Salvation?
 - e. What is the Relationship between Baptism, Faith and Discipleship?
 - f. What implications does Baptism have for the church?
 - g. Who may baptize and with what means and Formula ?
 - h. Why do people need to be baptized?
 - i. Who can receive baptism?
 - j. Why do we baptize children?
 - k. Why should someone be baptized only once?
 - l. What is the relationship between baptism and confirmation and/or profession of faith?
 - m. What is the relationship between baptism and election?
 - n. What is the relationship between baptism and grace?

- o. What is the relationship between baptism and sanctification?
- p. What is the relationship between baptism and the assurance of salvation?
- 6. Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of our Mutual Recognition of Baptism
- 7. Endnotes
- 8. Resources
- 9. Appendices
 - a. Notes on the Comparison of Rites for Paedo-Baptism in the PC(USA), UCC, RCA, RC and CRCNA texts

1. Introduction

A SEASON OF ENGAGEMENT

The 20th century was one of intense dialogue among churches throughout the world. In the mission field and in local communities, in regional ecumenical bodies and in bilateral discussions between churches, Christians made commitments to engage each other not only in cooperative activity but theological deliberation. The Roman Catholic Church and churches of the Reformed tradition have been no exceptions. This report on baptism is offered in the context of more than forty years of dialogue between the Reformed churches in the United States and the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (now the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops). The relationships in the United States form only a part of our context, however, and our dialogue has been enriched by encounter and relationships around the world.

OUR GLOBAL ROMAN CATHOLIC AND REFORMED CONTEXT

Important ecumenical events of the last forty years have influenced our theological perspectives as well as our maturing ability to understand each other. Liturgical renewals, encouraged by relationships with the Roman Catholic Church, have engendered in many Reformed Christians a deeper appreciation of our common roots. These renewals have heightened awareness of the richness of our common liturgical tradition. Roman Catholic seminaries have developed a renewed focus on the preaching of the word in the context of the sacramental liturgy, a strong emphasis in the Reformed tradition. In addition, in recent decades Roman Catholics have come to read Reformed theologians with new lenses. The discovery of new source material – both patristic and biblical – has greatly enhanced our collective ability to affirm a common heritage. More than ever before, ecumenical prayer services include a ritual for the reaffirmation of our baptismal vows, a reminder of that which binds us to each other as kindred in Christ, acknowledging our one calling through our one baptism, claimed by one God.

Earlier in our history, movements within our traditions sought to provide bridges between us. In the German Reformed community, for example, theologians of the Mercersburg liturgical movement made explicit commitments to rebuild relationship with the Roman Catholic Church as one element in manifesting the full visible unity of the church. Roman Catholic dioceses, in the aftermath of Vatican II, established diocesan ecumenical offices which nurtured the formation of “living room dialogues” in which many Reformed church members participated, enhancing relationships across the United States and the world.

Churches in relationship through the ecumenical movement have also sought to articulate specific beliefs about baptism. Our practices and our theologies have varied widely, but even without complete consensus there have emerged important experiences of convergence and deeper understanding. As a result of numerous bilateral dialogues, a growing familiarity with baptismal theology and practice among churches has made a profound contribution to the church's ability to claim its vision of unity. As recently as 2002 the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity in the Vatican urged ongoing study and dialogue of many theological issues for the enhancement of Roman Catholic and Reformed church relationships, most especially urging a focus on baptism as a basic to our Christian identity.

Some landmark studies have offered us encouragement and guidance along the way. The 1982 World Council of Churches document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* presented the churches with an important opportunity to engage in dialogue on these important matters. Through those studies, Christians came to appreciate more deeply their own and each other's baptismal expressions and theology.

More recently, in the Eighth Report of the Joint Working Group between the Vatican and the World Council of Churches (2005), Protestants, Catholics and Orthodox Christians explored the meaning and the practice of this sacrament. While this important study was much broader in ecclesial scope than the one we offer here, it reflects many issues found in our own bilateral dialogue, and it urges, as we do, further study in those areas of ongoing difference.

OUR REGIONAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

The international arena is only one among many vital settings for dialogue and reflection between Reformed and Roman Catholic Christians. Official discussions in national church settings in the United States have been equally important in advancing mutual understanding. Topics in the last forty years have included theological, liturgical and ethical issues. These issues have been explored with a consistent expectation that they are in primary service to the pastoral settings of all of our churches. Sound pastoral practice, however, rests on solid theological foundations. The current report, succeeding one on *Interchurch Families*, grew from a recognition that our pastoral customs reflect our different theological and ecclesiological traditions – differences which must be understood if we are to relate to each other in healthy ways.

In the United States, members of our traditions also encounter each other in local settings through common service and community worship experiences. Learning in those settings has been both intentional (through the formation of discussion groups between congregations and parishes) as well as informal (as neighbors work together on projects for the common good). Common work and intentional dialogue, where it has occurred consistently, has enabled members of both of our traditions to respond to community concerns effectively and deepen appreciation for the different gifts each brings to common public life.

Finally, the family has been a vital setting for dialogue between Roman Catholic and Reformed Christians in the United States. Increasingly, marriage and the mobility of extended families have contributed to this intimate encounter between the traditions, an experience which can be

both a joy and sometimes also confusing. Families are the settings where the gifts that each tradition brings can be most concretely received, but also the place where our differences can be most keenly felt, and where the pain of our divisions may have the most significant impact. It has been important, therefore, in official settings, to approach with utmost care those topics which affect the experience of our members and the pastoral leaders who serve them.

In all of these settings, both the Reformed and the Roman Catholic churches have affirmed the value of ecumenical engagement and increased mutual understanding. Through our ongoing encounter we have come to know each other's ecclesial characteristics, value each other's strengths, and make commitments to deeper relationships.

We hope this study will provide an occasion for ongoing dialogue among Roman Catholic and Reformed lay and ordained leaders, both in those places of longtime engagement, and in those settings where it will be entirely new. Such dialogue can contribute to the common witness of the church on the local level, and make ecumenical ideas a lived reality of Christian faith.

OUR HOPE

It is precisely the gift of our unity in the church of Jesus Christ through our baptisms which enables us to come to dialogue tables not just as acquaintances but as kindred – as members of one family in Christ – to consider in depth these matters of baptismal theology and practice.

The theological reflection in this report is intended to provide a sound basis on which our communions can express, in tangible ways, a mutual recognition of each other's baptisms. We have acknowledged areas of agreement and of difference. Through active engagement we have experienced our own faith tradition more clearly by seeing ourselves through the lenses of our partners. Through dialogue we have become reacquainted with our own tradition, the scriptures, and the sacraments. We have had the opportunity to examine, and, perhaps most important, to correct, past misunderstandings and caricatures. As our relationships have deepened we have celebrated those areas of theological consensus and we give thanks for the patient and careful dialogue which has brought our traditions closer together; we note those places where consensus has yet to be achieved but where ongoing dialogue holds promise for closer convergence; and we acknowledge those aspects of our theology and practice where there is no convergence but where the commitment to the eventual full, visible unity of the church will be well-served by enhanced mutual understanding.

Through an honest desire to understand each other, and therefore to acknowledge both the limits and the possibilities of what we can accomplish together, we believe we can make an enduring statement about what we hold in common.

We offer this report not simply as an academic study to be reviewed by those with a particular interest in the theology of baptism but to the entire constituency of all of our churches as a discernment of where the Holy Spirit is leading us together. We offer a prayer of hope that each encounter may move us to even deeper recognition and into a more faithful relationship with the Triune God. Ultimately our unity is not something we create but is a gift given us by God. Its visible manifestation is something for which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ prayed (John 17),

and we know that the earliest witnesses to the Christian faith proclaimed both the present reality and the eschatological hope of one Lord, one faith, and one baptism (Ephesians 4). Where we have fallen short of answering the call to that full visible unity, we confess our culpability and the enduring scandal of division within the body of Christ.

And so in celebration of what we hold in common, and in testimony to our desire to make God's gift of unity more visible, we offer our common witness in the following Common Agreement.

2.

COMMON AGREEMENT ON MUTUAL RECOGNITION OF BAPTISM
Roman Catholic-Reformed Church dialogue

1. Together we affirm that, by the sacrament of Baptism, a person is truly incorporated into the body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13 and 27; Ephesians 1:22-23), the church. Baptism establishes the bond of unity existing among all who are part of Christ's body and is therefore the sacramental basis for our efforts to move towards visible unity.
2. Together we affirm that Baptism is the sacramental gateway into the Christian life, directed toward the fullness of faith and discipleship in Christ.
3. Together we affirm that incorporation into the universal church by baptism is brought about by celebrating the sacrament within a particular Christian community.
4. Together we affirm that Baptism is to be conferred only once, because those who are baptized are decisively incorporated into the Body of Christ.
5. Together we affirm that baptism is a sacrament of the church, enacted in obedience to the mission confided to it by Christ's own word. For our baptisms to be mutually recognized, water and the scriptural Trinitarian formula "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28: 19-20) must be used in the baptismal rite.
6. Together we affirm that the validity of Baptism depends on its celebration according to the apostolic witness by the church and its authorized ministers.
7. Together we affirm, as a sign of our unity and as a witness to ecumenical commitment, the practice of inviting the presence and, where appropriate, the participation of members of our respective communions in the celebration of Baptism. At the same time, we affirm our responsibility to respect the integrity of the distinct baptismal practices of the communions in which the rite of Baptism is administered.
8. Given our mutual recognition of Baptism, we encourage using baptismal registers in the local church community and, when requested by another church for a pastoral need in the

life of an individual, providing written attestations of Baptism, including the liturgical formula used. Such cooperation and mutual accountability honors the dignity of the sacrament of Baptism.

We rejoice at the common faith we share and affirm in this document. We understand that the journey toward full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us. Because of these convictions, we encourage Roman Catholic and Reformed pastoral leaders to continue their commitment to regular dialogue about theology and pastoral practice from local to international settings. Pastoral leaders engaged in such dialogue embody our hopes for unity, collaborative effort, and common witness. We believe that respectful dialogue can provide a strong witness to the wider church about our commitment to a relationship in Christ and can stand as a safeguard against the unreflective judgments that have, at certain times in our history, diminished and distorted our relations.

3. Historical Overview: Perspectives on Sacramentality

The following sections describe both the history and theology of baptismal rites in the Reformed and Roman Catholic communions. Two different investigatory methods are evident in the work that follows: (1) *an historical approach* (especially Section II), narrating each communion's self understanding relative to sacramental practice, as developed over a given timeline, and (2) *a liturgical approach* (especially Section IIIA) that offers each communion's own account of the Church's interaction with God in the celebration of the rites themselves. The observations which follow are made only of Roman Catholic and not of Eastern Christian baptismal rites."

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Historical Introduction

The Reformed and Catholic communions share a common tradition about sacrament. They rejoice over what they uphold together and they understand where they evaluate the tradition differently. Their common tradition begins with the apostle Paul and the Greek word *mysterion* ("mystery") as found in Paul's letters (e.g., 1 Cor. 2:1; 4:1; Rom 16:25). There the word referred to God's hidden plan for salvation. The developing Pauline tradition (e.g., Eph. 1:9; 3:3, 4, 9; Col. 1:26-27; 2:2) took up this theme and proclaimed that this "mystery" is

embodied in Christ, in whose sufferings we share (e.g., Col. 1:24-2:3).¹ From there, early North African, Latin translations of the Greek New Testament translated *mysterion* with the word *sacramentum*. In this context, *sacramentum* referred to the redeeming work of God that was known through Jesus.

The writings of the North African theologian Tertullian (ca. 160-ca. 230), including what may be the earliest work on sacramental theology (*De Baptismo*), continued the connection between *mysterion* and *sacramentum*.² In *De Spectaculis* Tertullian calls the Eucharist a sacrament (3:10), and in *Adversus Marcionem* he calls Baptism a sacrament several times, as he also does in *De Baptismo*. Furthermore, Tertullian does not limit his understanding of sacrament simply to Baptism and Eucharist; he calls charity “the highest sacrament of the faith” (*De Patientia* 12:133-34), and he uses *sacramentum* in relation to martyrdom (*Scorpiace*, ch. 9).

The word sacrament carried two principal meanings by the early third century. It referred to Jesus because God’s redeeming presence was known through the man Jesus – what the *fides historica* broadly calls the incarnation. Sacrament also referred to certain rituals of the church because likewise through the physical, God’s redeeming presence was known. The much-beloved biblical passage that symbolically connected Jesus as sacrament to the church’s sacraments was the scene of blood (symbolizing the Eucharist) and water (symbolizing Baptism) flowing from the wounded side of Christ (Jn. 19:34). Many of the early church theologians allegorically interpreted this scene as referring to the birth of the Church through the issuance of Christ’s blood and water, that is, through the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist.³

By the fourth century the words *mysterion* and *sacramentum* gained prominence as the rite of Christian initiation, and the catechetical teachings about baptism and Eucharist, flourished in the post-Constantinian period. The writings of Ambrose (339-397), Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386), Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350-428), and other patristic theologians, speak about baptism and Eucharist from a Neoplatonic perspective in which the physical sign of the sacrament could be distinguished from the spiritual reality signified in it, yet truly participative in that same spiritual reality. Leo the Great (d. 461) would summarize this most notably in his homily for Ascension Day: “And so the sight of our Redeemer today passes into mystery

¹ See, for example, Günther Bornkamm, *Mysterion*, in Gerhard Kittel, ed. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Vol. IV (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1967) 803ff.

² To the idea of sacrament Tertullian also added the faithful human response to God’s redeeming work that comes to us through the *sacramentum*. For a general introduction to this material and helpful bibliography, see Thomas M. Finn, “Sacraments,” in *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York & London: Garland Publishing, Inc, 1990), 811-815. For *sacramentum*, see the discussion by Josef Finkenzeller, *Die Lehre von den Sakramenten in allgemeinen: Von der Schrift bis zur Scholastik* (Freiburg: Herder, 1980), 4-37, esp. 10-13, 25-30; also see, J. de Ghelinck, S.J., *Pour l’histoire du mot “sacramentum” I. Les Anténicéens* (Louvain: Spicelgium sacrum Lovaniense, 1924), esp. 12-18, 144-152. For a classic, late nineteenth century Protestant view on sacrament, see Ferdinand Kattenbusch, “Sakrament,” in *Real-Encyklopädie für Theologie und Kirche* 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896-1913), 17:349-381. Kattenbusch denies a proper theological and etymological connection between and *sacramentum*, but agrees that Tertullian first made the connection, probably based on North African, Latin translations of the New Testament (349-351). Also see Kevin W. Irwin, “Sacrament” in Joseph A. Komonchak, Mary Collins, and Dermot A. Lane (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press/A Michael Glazier Book, 1989, 1991) 910-22.

³ See Finkenzeller, *Lehre*, 22-23; cf. Saint John Chrysostom, *Catechesis* 3, 13-19; Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus*, PG 8, 299 and Ambrose of Milan, *In Luc.2*, 85-89: PL 15, 1666-1668.

(*sacramentum*)”⁴ -- which meant that what Jesus had done in history, had passed into “sacrament” or “mystery” celebrated by the Church each day in the liturgy. Perhaps the most influential among these theologians, however, stands the North African bishop, Augustine of Hippo (354-430), for whom physical realities were the windows through which the spiritual realities reach us.⁵ Augustine also has a notable chapter in the tenth book of *The City of God* that essentially exegetes the meaning to Rom. 12:1-3. There he argues that the communion of Christian lives given in love is offered to God as its sacrifice through Christ “the great High Priest (*sacerdotum magnum*, Cf. Hebrews 4:14 *et pass.*) who offered himself to God in His passion for us.” Augustine then closes the chapter by asserting that [t]his is the sacrifice of Christians: the many, the one body in Christ. And this likewise is the sacrifice that the church repeatedly celebrates by the sacrament of the altar, noted by the faithful, in which she shows that she herself is offered in the offering that she makes to God.⁶

The two senses of sacrament, as Jesus himself and as the sacraments of the church, continued into the medieval period and Latin theologians gradually synthesized the two ideas of sacrament into an integrated theology. The basic medieval concept was that the church is the body of the crucified, resurrected, and glorified Lord, and God’s grace continues to come to us through Christ just as it did in the incarnation. Only now the grace that comes through Christ comes through the sacraments, most especially the Eucharist, by which Jesus Christ continues to be present in the church. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), for example, gave a thorough exposition of eucharistic theology and sacrifice (cf. *Summa Theologica*, III, 73-83) that was a feature of an entire ecclesial world-view that was, so to speak, eucharistic.⁷ The whole world was related to and dependent upon the grace of God, known in creation, proclaimed in salvation

⁴ Cf. Leo the Great, *Sermon 74:2* (CCL) 138A, 457: *Quod itaque Redemptoris nostri conspicuum fuit, in sacramenta transivit*. For a full discussion of the relation between *sacramentum* and *mysterium* in the Latin tradition, see Y. Congar, *Le “mysterion” appliqué aux sacrements, traduit par “sacramentum” dans l’église ancienne* in *Un peuple messianique* (Paris: Cerf, 1974), 47-55. See also Louis Bouyer’s *The Christian Mystery*, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1989), especially 5-18 and 31-171 for a treatment of “mystery” in the liturgy.

⁵ For a summary of Augustine on sacrament as a sacred sign, see Finkenzeller, *Lehre*, 39-43. For a wider treatment, see Edward J. Kilmartin, S.J., *The Eucharist in the West*, ed. Robert J. Daly, S.J. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 3-61.

⁶ *De civitate dei* 10.6; CSEL 47.278-9. *Hoc est sacrificium christianorum: multi unum corpus in Christo. Quod etiam sacramento altaris fidelibus noto frequentat ecclesia, ubi et demonstratur, quod in ea re, quam offert, ipsa offeratur* (CSEL 47.279.52-55)

⁷ For a summary of Aquinas’s eucharistic teaching, and bibliographic references, see David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 163-240, esp. 208-240 (also see, 269-290). For a thorough entrance to the vast literature on Thomas Aquinas, see Otto Pesch, “Thomas von Aquino/Thomismus/Neothomismus,” in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie* (New York; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2002). In English, see Thomas O’Meara, *The Theology of Thomas Aquinas* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), particularly the annotated bibliography, 290-296. Also see, Kilmartin, *Eucharist in the West*, 247-266; Erwin Iserloh, “Abendmahl: III/2. Mittelalter,” *Theologisches Realenzyklopädie* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), 1:95-97; E. Mangenot, “Eucharistie du XII^e a la fin du XV^e siècle,” *Dictionnaire de théologie catholique* (Paris, 1913), 5:1304-1320, *passim*. For excellent shorter studies, more accessible to those not trained in scholastic theology, see Owen Cummings, “Medieval Eucharistic Theology,” *Emmanuel* (March, 1993): 73-79; Gary Macy, *The Banquet’s Wisdom* (New York: Paulist Press, 1992), 104-109; Herbert McCabe, “Eucharistic Change,” *Priests & People* 8/6 (1994): 217-221; Raymond Moloney, *The Eucharist* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1995), 139-150; David Power, “Eucharist,” in *Systematic Theology II: Roman Catholic Perspectives*, ed. Francis Schüssler Fiorenza, John P. Galvin (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 277-280. For an informative Catholic perspective on the sacraments in general, and thus the place of Thomas within this development, see Regis A. Duffy, “Sacraments in General,” in *Systematic Theology II*, 183-210.

history, and present once and still in Jesus Christ, Word made flesh, the one mediator, who has united believers into his reign, the Body of Christ. Into this triune God one was baptized, and by the very being of this God one was nourished during life's spiritual journey. Christ instituted the Eucharist, argued Thomas, because he desired to remain present in the church, in a sacramental manner available to faith, unlike a mere corporeal presence available to the senses. The whole economy of salvation, which comes to the individual as spiritual nourishment through faith in Christ's passion, is thus effectively realized now in the sacrament that is Christ's activity in the church itself.⁸

The late medieval period, and particularly the various reforming efforts in the late fifteenth and early sixteen centuries, inherited the traditions that connected sacrament to the church itself and to the rites that constituted the church and existed through the church. The Protestant reformers of the Reformed tradition continued to affirm that the true church was ultimately the body of Christ, just as they continued to affirm the sacraments that Jesus Christ instituted. The theological arguments by which they connected sacrament, church, and Jesus Christ constructed the tradition differently, however, than did the late medieval church as it moved into the Council of Trent.

3.a. Sacramentality

i. A Catholic View

Sacramentality is a key theological principle of Catholic ecclesial life. It applies not only to the seven sacraments and to the liturgy but is used in reference to the Church as a whole. In recent Catholic theology the notion of sacramentality functions as a foundational principle for Catholic thought and experience since it is related to the principles of mediation and communion as well as the theology of grace. Grounded in the doctrines of creation, incarnation, and the resurrection of the body, it has much to do with how creation elevated by grace is able to mediate the divine presence even as that presence is personal, hence grounded in the Trinitarian economy. It is an affirmation of the capacity of finite creation to be a means for God's manifestation and self-communication.

Divine revelation attests to the sacramental principle. In the history of salvation, the "economy of Revelation," is "realized in deeds and words, which are intrinsically bound up with each other" (*Dei Verbum*, 2). Since the works performed by God show forth the reality signified by the words and the words proclaim the works, so too, signs and symbols derived from creation and human culture are utilized by the Church in its liturgical life. The liturgy is at the heart of the Church's life as expressed in *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, The Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy of the Second Vatican Council: "the liturgy is the summit toward which the activity of the Church is directed; it is also the fount from which all her power flows" (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* 11). It is also a work of the Holy Trinity and through the mystery of Christ the High Priest it embraces both human and divine action. Therefore, liturgy is "an 'action' of the *whole Christ (Christus totus)*" (CCC 1136), that is, a work of the risen Christ and his Church.

The trinitarian nature of the liturgy proceeds from the missions of the Son and the Holy

⁸ See David N. Power, *The Eucharistic Mystery* (New York: Crossroads, 1994), 163-240, esp. 208-238.

Spirit (their “joint mission”⁹) that culminates in the incarnation of the Son and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. By virtue of the incarnation, the assumed human nature of Christ is inseparably united to the eternal Son of God in the hypostatic union and thus serves the divine Word as a “living organ of salvation.” So too, by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit “in a similar way, does the visible social structure of the Church serve the Spirit of Christ, who vivifies it, in building up the body” (*Lumen Gentium* 8).

Sacramentality consists of the coalescence of divine and human elements in the life of the Church whereby God acts through the visible organs of the Church especially the sacraments. Catholics, therefore, speak of the Church analogously as a sacrament, in that the “Church, then, both contains and communicates the invisible grace she signifies” (CCC 774). In Christ the Church is “a sign and instrument both of a closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (*Lumen Gentium* 1).

Sacramentality is consistent with the doctrine of creation whereby God speaks through the visible creation making it possible for human intelligence to read traces of the Creator in the material cosmos (CCC 1147). A solid theological anthropology needs underscore the social being of humanity and how signs and symbols are intrinsic to communication through language, gestures, and actions (CCC 1146). They are the means for “expressing the action of God who sanctifies men, and the action of men who offer worship to God” (CCC 1148). Consistent with God’s covenant with Israel, wherein both cosmic and social symbols are taken up in Israel’s liturgical life, Jesus himself often illustrated his preaching with physical signs and symbolic gestures, e.g., the use of spittle to heal the blind man (Jn 9: 6). So too, since Pentecost, “the Holy Spirit carries on the work of sanctification” through the sacramental signs of the Church (CCC 1152), what has been called its “sacramental economy” or “dispensation” (CCC 1076).

ii. A Reformed View

From within the long-standing Western tradition where sacrament referred both to the church, which is the body of Christ, and to the sacraments constituting the church, the Reformed tradition asserts that the true church, invisible to human eyes but visible to God’s eyes, is comprised of God’s faithful people gathered as the body of Christ. So *The Westminster Confession* (IX.4) says, “By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit all believers being vitally united to Christ, who is the Head, are thus united one to another in the Church, which is his body (cf., *Larger Catechism*, Qq. 64-66; *Scots Confession* XVI; *Second Helvetic Confession* XVII). Reformed theology calls neither the visible nor the invisible church a sacrament.

Reformed theology applies the word “sacrament” to the two divinely instituted signs, baptism and Lord’s Supper, to which God attaches the promise of grace (e.g., *Scots Confession* XXI; *Heidelberg Catechism* Q. 68; *Second Helvetic Confession* XIX; *Belgic Confession*, art. 34; *Westminster Confession* XXVII). In a loose sense, the true *visible* church might be called “sacramental” because its two marks, the preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments, both communicate God’s real self-giving in Jesus Christ, but such language would be historically foreign to the Reformed tradition. Likewise, although some church rites, such as ordination, penance, and marriage are God-given and useful (*Second Helvetic Confession* XIX); and although some simple church rites that are not contrary to the Word of God might be useful ceremonies (*Second Helvetic Confession* XXVII); the Reformed tradition has never

⁹ “In their joint mission, the Son and the Holy Spirit are distinct but inseparable. To be sure, it is Christ who is seen, the visible image of the invisible God, but it is the Spirit who reveals him.” CCC 689.

considered such rituals to be “sacramentals,” in the way that the sign of the cross, palms, ashes, incense, or candles were a means of grace within the medieval church.

By contrast, the Reformed tradition has considered the created order to be “sacramental,” insofar as the word connotes God’s self-communication, even if Reformed theology typically has refrained from such language. For example, Calvin believed that God accommodates God’s self in order that we might know who God is. God desires to span the distance between Creator and creation and meets us where we are, communicating to us as we so need, because we otherwise are incapable of knowing God (e.g., Com. Ex. 3:2; Com. Rom. 1:19; Com. 1 Cor. 2:7). The essence of God itself, of course, we can never know (*Inst.* 1.13.21), but God’s activity and will, however, can be seen in creation itself:

Consequently we know the most perfect way of seeking God, and the most suitable order, is not for us to attempt with bold curiosity to penetrate to the investigation of his essence, which we ought more to adore than to search out meticulously, but for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself to us (*Inst.* 1.5.9).

Creation can clearly be means by which God communicate to us because God

daily discloses himself in the entire working of the universe, so that we cannot open our eyes without being compelled to see him . . . on each of his works he has engraved sure marks of his glory, so clear and prominent that even uncultured and dim-witted people cannot plead ignorance as an excuse (*Inst.* 1.5.1)

The universe has become, says Calvin, “a kind of mirror (*speculi*) in which we are able to see him, so far as it concerns us to know him” (*Geneva Catechism* Q. 25; *OS* 1.77.25-7).

Furthermore, human culture also reflects God’s beneficent glory so that the human mind, even though “fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God’s excellent gifts” (*Inst.* 2.2.15). And thus Calvin acknowledges that law, philosophy, rhetoric, medicine, and mathematics were true and glorious achievements of ancient cultures because God’s grace was at work in the ancients and through these achievements God’s beneficence can be seen (*Inst.* 2.2.15). Likewise, through every age moral people have existed whose upright character can be contrasted with those less moral. The moral qualities exemplified are “special graces of God” (*speciales Dei gratias*) that show forth divine beneficence. (*Inst.* 2.3.3-4). The Canons of Dort put the issue this way:

There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him – so far, in fact, that man does not use it rightly even in matters of nature and society (III/IV, art. 4).

Human moral achievements, both individually and culturally, count not to our glory but to our condemnation because, as Calvin saw the matter, they are done not from thanksgiving that glorifies God, who was the source of such special graces, but were done from our own self-interest (*Inst.* 2.3.4). Thus the Canons of Dort say straightforwardly we “suppress” this light of God in “unrighteousness” and in so doing we render ourselves “without excuse before God” (III/IV, art. 4; cf. *Belgic Confession*, art. 14).

Finally, the Reformed tradition also understands that within the created order God has given certain signs that enable our confidence in God’s promises. Calvin says that such signs can be through natural elements, or even through miracles, and he calls such signs “sacraments” (*sacramenti nomen*; *Inst.* 4.14.18). Among natural signs, God used “the tree of life as a guarantee of immortality” to Adam and Eve. So, too, God gave the rainbow to Noah as a pledge of grace towards the earth. Although both tree and rainbow began as natural objects, when they were “inscribed by the Word of God” (*inscripta fuerunt verbo Dei*) they “began to be what previously they were not” (*inciperent esse quod prius non erant*). Among the miracles that were divinely given signs, Calvin notes the light in the smoking fire pot (Gen. 15:17), the fleece with dew (Judges 6:37-8), and the shadow of the sundial going backwards (2 Kgs. 20:9-11) (*Inst.* 4.14.18). These signs were not humanly invented but were given by God, and Calvin differentiates these from the “ordinary” sacraments that God instituted among God’s people, both of the old law and those instituted by Christ in the new law (*Inst.* 4.14.19-26).

3.b. Sacraments.

i. Sacraments from a Roman Catholic perspective

The sacraments then, especially the Eucharistic sacrifice, are the center of the Church’s liturgical life.¹⁰ Christ’s work in the liturgy enables the pilgrim Church to participate “as by a foretaste, in the heavenly liturgy” such that before the *parousia* the Holy Spirit dispenses the mystery of salvation in and through the Church’s prayer and sacraments (*CCC* 1112). The sacraments are sacraments of Christ founded in the saving mysteries of Christ’s life so that “what was visible in our Savior has passed over into his mysteries” (St. Leo the Great quoted in *CCC* 1115). The sacraments are sacraments of the Church “by her” and “for her” effectively instantiating the principle of sacramentality. For the Church “the sacraments make the Church” in that they manifest and communicate to human beings the mystery of communion with the triune God (*CCC* 1118). The sacraments are sacraments of faith because they presuppose faith (prepared by the Word of God) and through words and objects they nourish, strengthen and express faith (*CCC* 1122-1123). The sacraments are sacraments of salvation because they “confer the grace that they signify” (*CCC* 1127), bestowing the grace necessary for salvation (*CCC* 1129). The sacraments are sacraments of eternal life because in “the sacraments of Christ the Church already receives the guarantee of her inheritance and even now shares in everlasting life (*CCC* 1130).

Catholics also speak of the validity and efficacy of the sacraments, the latter having been a sore point of contention during the Reformation. For a sacrament to be valid it must be administered according to the intention of the Church to confer the grace of Christ, by a proper minister, and with the form and matter of the particular sacrament. The ministers must be validly ordained except in the case of matrimony where the minister witnesses the sacrament that is

¹⁰ There are seven sacraments in the Catholic Church: Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Reconciliation or Penance, Anointing of the Sick, Matrimony, and Holy Orders.

conferred by the spouses upon each other or in baptism where in the case of an emergency (not the normative administration of baptism) anyone may baptize if they do so with the Church's intention. The form along with the matter of the sacrament embraces the appropriate objects: for example, water, bread, wine, oil, etc., and their corresponding words or sacramental formulae (based on the New Testament accounts) of the Last Supper words of institution for the sacrament of the Eucharist and the Trinitarian baptismal formula.

Sacramental efficacy concerns the conferral of grace in the sacramental act.

The "sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: "by the very fact of the action's being performed"), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that 'the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God.' From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them" (CCC 1128).

Catholics understand in this principle the guarantee of Christ's salvific action in the sacraments not because of any notion that the sacraments are magical in nature, an unfortunate characterization, but because Christ established the sacraments and his Spirit acts through them. It underscores the Church's firm conviction about the priority of grace and her dependence on Christ. Nor does this mean that the faith of the minister and recipients of the sacraments is unimportant. In sacraments the posture of the recipient may be interpreted as the disposition of the one receiving the sacraments so as to not place any obstacle in the way of reception, such as impenitence, and more positively to receive the sacraments in faith, hope and love, and cooperate with the grace received to bear fruit.

Efficacy also includes the grace proper to each sacrament, i.e., sacramental grace, and in the case of Baptism, Confirmation, and Holy Orders, the reception of an indelible spiritual sign, mark, seal, or character of the specific sacrament imprinted on the soul. This sacramental character consecrates the person to Christ according to the particularity of the sacrament and underscores the non-repeatability of the sacrament. In Baptism and Confirmation one is consecrated to the common priesthood of the faithful, and in Holy Orders to the ministerial priesthood.

In summary, the sacraments of the Church are the principle means of grace instituted by Christ and through them Christ acts in the Church. Sacraments are "'powers that come forth' from the Body of Christ, which is ever-living and life-giving. They are actions of the Holy Spirit at work in his Body, the Church. They are "the masterworks of God" in the new and everlasting covenant" (CCC 1116) with each as mentioned imparting its own specific grace.

The means of grace also include sacramentals—"sacred signs instituted by the Church...[that] prepare men to receive the fruit of the sacraments and sanctify different circumstances of life" (CCC 1677)—such as blessings, exorcisms, and sacred signs, objects and gestures including, for example, holy water, the sign of the cross, altars, vestments, incense, rosaries, etc., many of which inform the variety of expressions of popular piety. The latter engages the common priesthood of all the faithful and embraces the material universe in its use

of signs for worship, devotion, and pious and spiritual exercises. The theological principle that accounts for the efficacy of grace in sacramentals is *ex opere operantis* (“from the work of the worker”). Although God is still the source of grace, its impartation in sacramentals is proportioned to the holiness and faith of the believer engaged in their practice. One may also speak of *ex opere operantis Ecclesiae* since it is the Church that acts or prays not only in the sacraments but also in non-sacramental liturgy, e.g., the Liturgy of the Hours, and in various forms of devotional prayer that the Church encourages. All of these are ways in which grace is offered by Christ in the Holy Spirit and increased through its faithful reception by believers and their fruitful cooperation with it.

3.b.

ii A Reformed View

The Reformed tradition historically argued at the time of the Protestant Reformation, and still theologically maintains, that worship ought to be done according to scripture. For some of the tradition, only those practices could be done that scripture warranted:

But the acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by himself, and so limited by his own revealed will, that he may not be worshipped according to the imaginations and devices of men, or the suggestions of Satan, under any visible representation or any other way not prescribed in the Holy Scripture.
(*Westminster Confession XXIII*)

For other parts of the tradition, rites not prescribed by scripture could still be celebrated for our benefit so long as they did not go against scripture. As the *Second Helvetic Confession* pastorally puts the matter, “a few moderate and simple rites, that are not contrary to the Word of God, are sufficient for the godly” (XXVII).

The Reformed tradition thus counts the dominically instituted sacraments as two, baptism and the Lord’s Supper (e.g., *Scots Confession XXI*; *Heidelberg Catechism Q. 68*; *Second Helvetic Confession XIX*; *Belgic Confession*, art. 34; *Westminster Confession XXVII*). To these sacraments the Reformed tradition applies the long-standing hermeneutic of *signum-res* to explain what a sacrament is. To the outer sign God attaches an inner reality; and the Reformed tradition typically understands that the inner reality that inheres to the sign is ultimately Christ himself (e.g., *Tetrapolitan Confession*, XVII-XVIII; *First Basel Confession*, VI; *Second Basel Confession (First Helvetic Confession)*, 20 and 22 (Supper); *Scots Confession XXI*; *Second Helvetic Confession XIX*; *French Confession*, XXXIV-XXXVI; *Belgic Confession*, art. 33). As the *Second Helvetic Confession* says,

the principle thing which God promises in all sacraments and to which all the godly in all ages direct their attention (some call it the substance [*substantiam*] and matter [*materiam*] of the sacraments) is Christ the Savior (XIX).

Some Reformed voices express the object signified with a proximate description, such as “holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and his benefits, and to confirm our interest in him” (*Westminster Confession XXVII*). When one reaches the actual discussion of baptism and Supper, however, one typically finds there the

description of a person's baptismal "ingrafting in Christ (*Westminster Confession* XXVIII.1), or that in the Supper "really and indeed . . . receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death"(*Westminster Confession* , XXIX.7).

Reformed theology distinguishes between the validity and the efficacy of the sacraments. The sacraments are to be administered by duly ordained ministers of the church (e.g., *Scots Confession* XXII; *Second Helvetic Confession* XVIII, XIX; *Large Catechism*, Q. 169), and when so administered, with the proper sign and divine promise of grace, as the church intentionally follows the mandate of scripture, the sacrament validly offers what the sign signifies:

Two things are necessary for the right administration of the sacraments. The first is that they should be ministered by lawful ministers . . . and the second is that they should be ministered in the elements and manner which God has appointed. Otherwise they cease to be the sacraments of Christ Jesus (*Scots Confession* XXII).

In a long discussion, the *Second Helvetic Confession* contrasts validly offered sacraments with the efficacy that includes "the condition of those who receive them."

For we know that the value [i.e., fruitfulness] of the sacraments depends on faith and upon the truthfulness and pure goodness of God. For as the Word of God remains the true Word of God, in which, when it is preached, not only bare words are repeated, but at the same time the things signified or announced in words are offered by God, even if the ungodly and unbelievers hear and understand the words yet do not enjoy the things signified, because they do not receive them by true faith; so the sacraments, which by the Word consist of signs and the things signified, remain true and inviolate sacraments, signifying not only sacred things, but, by God offering, the things signified, even if unbelievers do not receive the things offered (XIX).

Thus while under right administration sacraments validly offer the divine reality that the signs signify, the efficacy applies only to those who receive the sacraments in faith. Calvin's 1545 *Geneva Catechism* (no. 329) simply asserts that when the sacraments are offered "[m]any do close the way by their perverseness and so make it worthless for themselves. Thus its fruit reaches only the faithful. Yet from that nothing of the nature of the sacrament disappears (*nihil sacramenti naturae decedit*)."

Finally, the Reformed tradition holds that baptism and the Lord's Supper are not strictly speaking the first sacraments that God gave to God's people. God granted sacraments in the old dispensation, and the "sacraments of the ancient people were circumcision, and the Paschal Lamb, which was offered up" (*Second Helvetic Confession* XIX). The Reformed tradition generally ascribes to these sacraments the same ultimate reality signified as those signified by the sacraments instituted by Jesus Christ (*Westminster Confession* XXVII.7), for in each case Christ "is the chief thing and very substance of the sacraments in both" (*Second Helvetic Confession* XIX). The Reformed tradition argues that there is an ultimate unity of covenant between old and new. As Calvin put the matter,

The covenant with all the patriarchs is so much not different from ours in substance and reality (*substantia et re*) that it is absolutely one and the same thing (*Inst.* 2.10.2)

This covenant unity exists because the patriarchs “had and knew Christ the mediator, through whom they were joined (*coniungerentur*) to God and were partakers of his promises” (*Inst.* 2.10.2). Thus, Calvin rejected “that scholastic dogma (to mention this in passing) which notes so great a difference between the sacraments of the old and new law, as though the old did nothing but foreshadow the grace of God, but the latter truly conferred it as a present reality” (*Inst.* 4.14.23).

At the same time, some Reformed confessions also try to distinguish the sacraments that were given “under the Law” (*Scots Confession* XXI) from those given under the new dispensation. The *Second Helvetic Confession* asserts that “a great difference” exists between the signs. The new signs are “are more firm and lasting,” “more simple and less laborious,” and “belong to a more numerous people.” Further, “both the substance and promise” (*et rem et promissionem*) have been “fulfilled or perfected” in Christ, and “a greater abundance of the Spirit” follows (XIX).

3. c. Summary

In our respective accounts of sacramentality it is evident that this theological concept weighs more heavily in the Catholic than in the Reformed tradition. Perhaps this is most clear in our respective understandings of ecclesiology. As we have seen in the Catholic section, the notion of the Church as sacrament emerged in theology, in the conciliar documents of the Second Vatican Council, and has been utilized in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Reformed theologians have been less apt to appropriate this ecclesiological model. It is interesting that the following statement appeared in the 1976 Report of the U.S. Presbyterian & Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, entitled *The Unity We Seek*.

...we see the Church as called to be a sign—a sacrament—
of that unity which God has willed for his creation and
disclosed in Jesus Christ.

However at the international level things are quite different.

In the second phase (1984-1990) of the Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, the Final Report entitled *Towards a Common Understanding of the Church*, two respective conceptions of the Church were examined: the Church as “*Creatura Verbi*” for the Reformed tradition and the Church as “Sacrament of Grace” for Roman Catholics. In their “Questions and Reflections” on these distinct ecclesiologies the document states what is worth quoting in full.

112. We are agreed in recognizing the radical dependence of the church in receiving the transcendent gift which God makes to it, and we recognize that gift as the basis of its

activity of service for the salvation of humanity. But we do not yet understand the nature of this salutary activity in the same way. The Reformed commonly allege that Catholics appropriate to the church the role proper to Christ. Roman Catholics, for their part, commonly accused the Reformed of holding the church apart from the work of salvation and of giving up the assurance that Christ is truly present and acting in his church. Both these views are caricatures, but they can help to focus attention on genuine underlying differences of perspective, of which the themes of *creatura verbi* and *sacramentum gratiae* serve as symbols.

113. The two conceptions, “the creation of the word” and “sacrament of grace,” can in fact be seen as expressing the same instrumental reality under different aspects, as complementary to each other or as two sides of the same coin. They can also be poles of a creative tension between our churches. A particular point at which this tension becomes apparent is reached when it is asked how the questions of the continuity and order of the church through the ages appear in light of these two concepts.

Although we did not discuss these texts the tension stated often surfaced in our discussions. We recognize that the comments of the international dialogue penetrate to the heart of our distinct understandings of sacramentality. It can also be noted that World Council of Churches 2005 Faith and Order Paper, *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* was able to affirm that Church is a “Gift of God, a Creation of the Word and Holy Spirit,” and can even speak of the “Church as a Sign and Instrument of God’s Intention and Plan for the World.” However, it could not agree on the Church as sacrament, confining that concept to a box in the text that articulates alternative views. With this in mind we hope that our text on baptism may be a further stepping stone to a common understanding of the Church and sacramentality.

Section 4: Baptismal rites

a. Common early history

Just as Roman Catholic and Reformed churches share a common tradition about the theology of sacrament, so also we have in common the history of baptismal practice and reflection up until the sixteenth century. Our respect for common biblical and patristic sources has in recent decades become a central impetus for convergence, if not complete agreement, relative to the celebration of baptism in our communions. For this reason, it is useful to review briefly the early history of the church’s baptismal rites, as well as the medieval developments that preceded our separation.¹

The liturgical form of baptism in the New Testament period is not known with precision. However, it would seem that Matthew 28:19-20 reflect actual baptismal practice, sanctioned by

the way it is placed on the lips of the Risen Christ. The expressions “baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 19:5) though at times interpreted as referring to a liturgical formula, may in fact simply refer to the rite of baptism in the same way that the term “the breaking of the bread” is used to refer to the Eucharist. Some suggestions of early Christian baptismal practice are attested in the *Didache* (9:5) which is possibly as early as 60 C.E., as an indication of how liturgical praxis would emerge from its home in apostolic Judaism.

Though the New Testament records few details about baptismal practice in the earliest days of Christianity, it is clear that new converts to Christianity were initiated into Christ and the church by baptism, a ritual washing that was eventually connected with the command of Jesus himself (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism seems, at first, to have been modeled on the actions of John the Baptist (cf. Jn.1.31, 33 and Acts 1.22) which symbolized repentance or *teshuvah*, and bore some continuity with either the ritual washing or *mikvah* of second temple Judaism, Jewish proselyte baptism as used from at least the first century B.C.E., or the more isolationist Essene-style baptism which was eschatological in character (cf. *Serekh ha-Yahad* or “Community Rule Scroll”). However, it was John himself who would presage the baptism of Jesus by distinguishing his own as merely a “water” baptism versus the “spirit” or “fire” baptism to be given by the promised one (Mt. 3.11 and Lk.3.16; Jn.1.33). Jesus would then use the term “baptism” to describe either a sharing in his sufferings for those who would follow him (cf. Mt. 20.22-23 and Mk. 10.38) or as a name for his own rite of washing with water, but offered by his disciples (Jn.4.1-2) at first only to Jews. Later, the apostles would adapt John’s practices to the injunctions of Jesus to baptize gentiles as well (cf. Matt. 28. 19-20), with Paul then developing the term typologically by contrasting the Israelites’ “baptism into Moses” (1 Cor. 10.2) over and against baptism into Christ Jesus. In sum, New Testament accounts provide several controlling images for baptism, with two of these particularly important in the patristic era, only to re-emerge as central themes in recent reforms of baptism: (1) baptism as new birth through water and the Spirit (John 3) and (2) baptism as union with Christ in his death and resurrection (Romans 6).

New Testament texts are ambiguous about whether baptism was extended only to adults, or may have included children, as well. When Paul and others are said to have baptized an entire “household” (*oikos*), there is no doubt that it included men and women, married and widowed, and those who were free (cf. 1 Cor.1.16; Acts 16.15;11.14;16.31). But did it also embrace slaves and children ? Early Church figures such as Tertullian (c.160-c.240 C.E.) (cf. *De spect.* 4; *De corona mulites* 3; *De anima* 35) speak warmly of the baptism of children, but there seems to be no clear answer to the question of a universal understanding about the matter in the immediately sub-apostolic period. The probability of other mixed practices in the performance of baptism are also suggested in the New Testament. While it is clear, for example, that the Lord’s injunction at Mt. 28. 19-20 involves a declarative formula for baptism, it is equally clear in Acts. 2.38, 8.16, 10.48 and 19.5 that “baptism in the name of the Lord Jesus” was commonplace in many early Jewish-Christian communities¹¹. The same practice is found in the baptismal sections of the *Didache* 9.5 (c. 60 C.E.), where Christian praxis would emerge slowly from its home in apostolic Judaism.

In the second and third centuries, sources reveal varying patterns of development in baptismal practices. Justin Martyr’s (100-165 C.E.) account of baptism in Rome, found in his

¹¹ Though this term may have been the common expression for a fuller ritual expression of baptism (cf. *fractio panis*).

First Apology (61, 65), describes a water baptism whose language is built around Eastern Christian notions of illumination.

In Syria (*Didascalia apostolorum*, 9.12) (c.250 C.E.?), there was strong emphasis on pre-baptismal anointing associated with the assimilation of the baptized into the royal and priestly offices of Christ. The baptism itself was accompanied by the Trinitarian formula and led directly to Eucharist. In North Africa, Tertullian (c.160-c.240 C.E.) described a process that included vigils and fasts, renunciation of Satan, threefold creedal profession of faith at baptism, post-baptismal anointing, prayer with laying on of hands associated with the gift of the Spirit, and participation in the eucharist (see *De spect.* 4; *De corona mulieres* 3; *De anima* 35) . The contested *Apostolic Tradition*, 21 (attributed to Hippolytus of Rome, ca. 215 C.E.) describes three years of catechesis, including prayer, fasting, and exorcism, and a formal rite of admission to the catechumenate accompanied by careful interrogation about lifestyle, all leading up to baptism at a vigil (perhaps the Easter Vigil). This baptismal rite included renunciation of Satan, full body anointing with the “oil of exorcism (or: oil of the catechumens),” threefold creedal questioning accompanying baptismal immersions, post-baptismal anointing with the “oil of thanksgiving”, entrance into the assembly at which the bishop offered the laying on of hands, with prayer, and yet another anointing, and finally, participation in the eucharist (cf. the 5th century Syrian *Canons of Hippolytus*, 19.133). The timing of baptism also differed, some Eastern sources suggesting January 6 as the preferred date, others forty days after January 6 (following a period of fasting), and some Western sources choosing Easter or Pentecost.

Baptismal practices underwent significant change in the fourth century, following Constantine’s rise to power and legitimating of Christianity as the legal religion of the empire. Again, there are differences between Eastern and Western baptismal practices. In the East, according to the writings of Cyril of Jerusalem (fl. 350-387 C.E.) (*Mystagogical Catechesis*, 1.2;2.3;1.9;2.2;3.1 and 5.1); John Chrysostom (fl. 349-407 C.E.) (*Hom. De bap.* II, 11, 12, 18, 21, 22, 24, 25-27), and Theodore of Mopsuestia (fl. 350-428 C.E.) (*Hom.de bap.*,II, III) baptismal practice generally included the following elements:

- Easter baptism, and the forty day season of Lent for pre-baptismal catechesis on scripture, Christian life, and the creed for those preparing for baptism
- “Scrutinies” (examination of baptismal candidates for evidence of sin and evil remaining in their lives) and daily exorcisms during this period of final catechesis
- Development of renunciation and profession of faith by the candidates
- Ceremonial presentation (*traditio*) and recitation (*redditio*) of the Creed by the candidates
- Reinterpretation of the pre-baptismal anointing as exorcism, purification, and/or preparation for combat with Satan
- Use of Romans 6 as basis for baptism as entrance into the tomb with Christ, signified by the passive formula “N. is baptized . . .”
- Post-baptismal anointing associated with the gift and seal of the Holy Spirit
- Mystagogical catechesis (preaching that expounds on the mysteries which the newly baptized have experienced at baptism) during Easter week

Of course, pre-baptismal rites were widely used, but varied from one local church to another, as the homilies of the Fathers attest (e.g., compare the rites and catechesis for catechumens as

described by Quodvultdeus [c. 450] in his *de Symbolo*, 1,2,3 with those of Leo the Great [d.446] *Homilia* 16.6). At this point, there was no uniform practice in the West regarding a fixed baptismal “formula”, but instead, there is frequent use of three creedal questions and their responses at the moment of baptism. The correspondence between the use of the invocation and the styles of baptismal immersions was even more varied (cf. de Puniet, *Baptême* in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie Chrétienne et de Liturgie* (Paris, 1910) 2: col. 305-306).

This developed pattern did not survive much beyond the fourth century in either East or West. Once the vast majority of adults in the Roman Empire were baptized as Christians (after the early medieval period), there was no longer a need for an extended period of pre-baptismal catechesis. In addition, the teachings of Augustine (354-430 C.E.) strongly shaped baptismal theology and practice in the West in two ways: first, his argument for infant baptism based on the need to be cleansed of original sin led to an emphasis on early infant baptism as the norm (*De peccatorum meritis et remissione et de baptismo parvulorum* and *De spiritu et littera*) Second, his argument with the Donatists over the practice of rebaptism led to a focus on the sacramental elements (water, wine, bread) and their objective validity apart from the moral character of the one administering them (*Contra epistolam Parmeniani*, PL 43) As a result, medieval Western baptismal practice included baptizing infants as soon as possible, the permission for anyone to baptize (not only a priest), and a focus on the validity of the sacrament rather than the extended drama of the fourth century rites.

The baptismal rite for infants in the medieval era became in essence a compressed version of the rite for adults. Godparents or ministers responded to the questions on behalf of the children who could not do so themselves. The rituals of handing over the creed and the Lord’s Prayer eventually were eliminated, while other elements of the fourth century rites (admission to the catechumenate, exorcisms, administration of salt and the clothing with the white garment) remained, but adapted for use with an infant. Other elements of the baptismal rites were reinterpreted. The timing of baptism also shifted; though Easter and Pentecost had been the preferred occasions for baptism in the fourth century, the emphasis on baptizing infants as soon as possible led to the practice of administering baptism within a few days of an infant’s birth, no matter the season of the year. Gregory the Great (540-604 C.E.) even allows for a single immersion of adult or child in water, accompanied by the Trinitarian formula (*Epist.* 1.43). By the eighth century, the *Missale Gothicum*, [260] called for the use of a declarative baptismal formula, taken from Mt. 28.19-20, marking a definitive end to the previous question and answer style of the Latin fathers.

A final significant development in baptismal rites in the West was the separation of three liturgical acts: baptism, the anointing that came to be known as confirmation, and first communion. Once the post-baptismal anointing became a sacrament reserved for the bishop, it was commonly celebrated at a time separated—sometimes by several years—from the water baptism. This rite of confirmation was interpreted differently by writers in the medieval period, but gradually came to be associated with the giving of the Holy Spirit. Though the rite of confirmation was celebrated as a separate sacrament, however, priests continued to anoint the baptized with chrism immediately following water baptism, symbolizing participation in the royal and priestly anointing of Christ. The timing of first communion varied considerably: in the early medieval period it was usually given at the time of baptism, but in the eleventh century first communion was usually postponed until age seven or later, because of increasing reverence for

the sacramental species. In 1281, the Archbishop of Canterbury, John Peckham, insisted that no one should come to communion until they had been confirmed, while in Spain and southern Gaul for a time the unity of the three rites of initiation was preserved in their original order (see *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae II: Constiutiones Peckham, p. 54*).

At the dawn of the sixteenth century, though there was not absolutely uniform practice in the Western church, a common baptismal order looked like this:

Sarum Rite of Baptism (1543)

The following rite of baptism can be found in the Sarum Manual printed in Rouen in 1543, the final edition of its kind for use in England before the break with Rome and the issuance of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549. As such, the Sarum rite given here represents the shape of the baptismal rite before a universal rite for baptism would be imposed by Rome following the Council of Trent.

I Entrance Rites

- A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church
- B. Signing of the head and chest of the baptizand; giving of name by godparents
- C. Exorcism of salt
- D. Giving of salt to baptizand
- E. Prayer for assignment of guardian angel
- F. Exorcism
- G. Ephphetha ceremony
- H. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents

II Rites at the Baptismal Font

- A. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents
- B. Litany of the Saints
- C. Blessing of water in the font
- D. Mixing of oil and chrism with baptismal water
- E. Renunciation of Satan by godparents
- F. Anointing with oil of catechumens
- G. Baptismal promises taken by godparents
- H. Baptism
- I. Anointing with chrism
- J. Clothing with white garment
- K. Presentation of lighted candle
- L. Confirmation, if a bishop is present
- M. Giving of holy communion, if baptizand is at least seven years of age
- N. Reading of the Gospel of Mark 9.17-29; reading of prologue of the Gospel of John 1.1-14.

Source: A.J. Collins, *Manuale ad usum percelebris ecclesiae Sarisburiensis* (Henry Bradshaw Society, XCIX). 1960

4. b. Historical Developments: The Reformation

In the 16th century, Protestant reformers sought to reform the church according to scripture and with respectful attention to the early church sources they had available at the time. In light of these sources, they retained the central practice of baptism with water in the triune name of God, but amended the medieval baptismal rites in the following major ways:

- They emphasized that the *Word of God* engrafts believers into the body of Christ. Thus baptism was understood as a visible form of that Word, conveying and communicating the grace of God only as it is administered in conjunction with the proclamation of the Word.ⁱⁱ There could be no baptism unless there was also proclamation of the Word. Also, because of their emphasis on the power of the Word of God, reformers emphasized the need to administer the sacrament of baptism, as all of the rites of the church, in the vernacular. That which was not understood could not be properly received and thus could not be efficacious.
- They focused attention on the *water* as the primary and only essential symbolic element. Thus they eliminated elements of the rite that were deemed non-essential and non-scriptural: elements such as oil, salt, spittle, and candles. Related to this was their concern to clarify that baptism itself is a sign and promise of the baptism of the Holy Spirit.ⁱⁱⁱ
- They focused attention on the *ecclesial dimension* of the sacrament. Thus they emphasized the importance of baptizing in the context of the gathered community, and strongly resisted the practice of private baptism.^{iv} Because Reformed Protestants denied that baptism was necessary for salvation, “emergency baptisms” were eliminated, and only ordained ministers were permitted to administer baptism, within the body of the church.
- They focused attention on the *connection between baptism and nurture* in Christian faith. As a result of this, many reformers were concerned to choose appropriate godparents for infants to be baptized, and charging them with helping to raise the baptized child in the faith, though at other times the parents themselves were admonished to raise the child in the faith. Some Reformed rites also include admonitions to the congregation to assist in Christian nurture.

The implications of these revisions to baptismal practice were twofold: on the one hand, baptism was no longer understood to be necessary for salvation or engrafting into Christ, but on the other hand, reformers in various ways sought to highlight water baptism as a real means of grace that conveyed what it signified: forgiveness of sins and regeneration. These four emphases (centrality of the Word, focus on water, ecclesial nature of baptism, and connection of baptism and ongoing nurture) have continued to be central principles in Reformed baptismal practices until the present, though they have not always received equal attention or led to the same outcome.

Though Martin Luther is not strictly speaking a part of the Reformed Protestant family, his reforms clearly influenced the liturgical developments in the Reformed tradition. In his baptismal liturgies, we can see increasing focus on the water as the central element in baptism, as well as emphasis on the Word in connection with the rite. His first vernacular reformed rite of

baptism retained much of the medieval baptismal rite of Magdeburg, which was widely used in his time, though in his “epilogue” he made it clear that elements such as “breathing under the eyes, signing with the cross, placing salt in the mouth, putting spittle and clay on the ears and nose” were not central to baptism (First *Taufbüchlein*, 1523). In his second *Taufbüchlein* (1526), Luther trimmed many more elements of the medieval rite, focusing even more strongly on the water.^v His interest in the central symbol of water can also be seen in his “Flood Prayer,” in which the flood and exodus are interpreted as types of baptism. This liturgical element became commonplace in many Reformed liturgies that followed. In addition to the focus on water, Luther regarded the Word as central to baptism, since it constituted God’s promise to which the sign of water was attached. Therefore, the most important liturgical elements in his view were the word and the flood prayer. Though Luther retained some patristic elements (e.g., exorcism) that later Reformed leaders rejected, his emphasis on the Word and the symbol of water influenced the development of later Reformed baptismal services.

Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich produced an order for baptism in 1525 that purported to remove “all the additions, which have no foundation in the word of God.”^{vi} Zwingli eliminated cleansing, exorcism, renunciation, and even profession of faith, all of which had been present in Luther’s second baptismal rite. Here too we can see the focus on water as the central symbol of baptism, as well as the Word as both divine promise and norm for liturgical reform. His was a very simple service that clarifies the centrality of faith to the understanding of baptism and offers a clear scriptural warrant for infant baptism, born out of Zwingli’s own struggle with the Anabaptists. In the same year in Strassburg, Martin Bucer published his revised baptismal rite, which likewise focuses the prayer on the gift of faith and new life in Christ.^{vii} In Bucer’s rite we also see a feature that became important in many later Reformed baptismal services: the admonition or charge to families and/or godparents to raise the child in the faith. Both of these features point to the common Reformed concern to link baptism with ongoing nurture in Christian faith.

During his years in Strassburg (1538-1541), John Calvin surely learned from Bucer’s practice of baptism. When Calvin himself produced an order of baptism for the church in Geneva in 1542, however, his order bore little resemblance to Bucer’s. Calvin specified that children were to be brought to the church either on Sunday afternoon at the time for catechism, or on a weekday after the morning preaching. These instructions suggest the importance of connecting baptism with preaching or teaching, and they also reveal a lingering concern to baptize the child as soon as possible after birth, an ironic impulse given his denial that baptism was necessary for salvation.^{viii} By Calvin’s time, the baptismal exhortation had become a central feature of Reformed baptismal rites, presenting careful teaching on the nature, use, and significance of baptism, including why it was appropriate to baptize infants (against the Anabaptists).

John Knox patterned his baptismal service after Calvin’s, including the opening address and the charge to godparents. In 1556 he produced the “Forme of Prayers” for his Scottish congregation in Geneva.^{ix} The language of the post-baptismal prayer, original with Knox, was echoed in the 1645 Westminster Directory and in later generations of Reformed baptismal services in this stream of the Reformed tradition.

In 1566, the Reformed Church in Holland adopted a baptismal liturgy based on the baptismal rite used in Heidelberg in the early 1560s.^x Like the other Reformed 16th century liturgies, it included a strong emphasis on teaching, together with parental promises to nurture

the child in the faith, followed by baptism and prayer of thanksgiving. This liturgy was later included in the *Liturgy* adopted at the Synod of Dort (1618-1619). Versions of this baptismal service were used by both streams of the Dutch-American Reformed church (both RCA and CRC) until the early 20th century, and continues to be used in some Christian Reformed Churches in English translation.

Though these 16th century Reformed orders of baptism show variation in their language and ordering of elements, they share the common concerns stated earlier: attention to the Word (particularly clear in explicit scriptural warrant for liturgical practice); emphasis on the water as central symbol and sign of God's grace; concern to locate baptism in the church in connection with public worship; and emphasis on the connection of baptism and ongoing nurture of the faith (as illustrated by admonitions to parents and/or godparents). We also see through the 16th century a growth in exhortation/instruction as a part of the baptismal service in Reformed congregations. Though baptismal instruction may well have been intended by Zwingli and Bucer, this element is firmly ensconced as a part of the baptismal service by the time we reach Calvin, Knox, and the Heidelberg-Dutch traditions. These four themes that shaped reform of rites in the 16th century continue to exercise major influence in Reformed rites up to the present.

4. c. Historical developments: Roman Catholic

The Council of Trent (1545-1563) left the actual revision of the rites of the sacraments to the judgment of the Pope and his curia as the agents of reform (see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990] 5). It would take the major effort of Pius V (1504-1572) and Paul V (1552-1621) to help realize the required changes. Session 7 of that council addressed fourteen principal concerns about baptism which were intended to answer the claims of some reformers who had posed new understandings about long-held baptismal belief. These same concerns would influence the shape of baptismal rites only gradually, if at all, during the fifty year period following the Council.

Among the concerns which touched on the rite of baptism itself was the necessity for the use of water in baptism, rather than the acceptance of a kind of "baptism of the spirit" in its place (Sess.7:c.2). In addition, the Council re-affirmed that baptism may be validly administered by anyone, including heretics, as long as they held "the intention of doing what the church does" (*cum intentione faciendi, quod facit ecclesia*) in baptism (Sess.7:c.4). The Council denied that the only appropriate age for baptism is adulthood (Sess.7:cc.12; cf. cc.13 and 14). Lastly, Trent clearly taught that children who are baptized need not be re-baptized when they reach the ability to profess their own faith, since the Church professed faith on their behalf at their baptisms (Sess.7:c.13).

Implicit in several of the canons from the Council of Trent (Sess. 7:cc. 12, 13, 14, 14) is an argument about whether baptism is efficacious for those not able to freely profess their own faith, but instead have it professed by others on their behalf. This practice had been rejected vigorously by the Anabaptists, but defended as authentically Christian by John Calvin in 1536 (*Institutes* 4.16); in Martin Luther's *Sermon on the Third Sunday after the Epiphany* of 1525 and in Martin Bucer's *Grund und Ursach* of 1521. It is to be noted, however, that the Reformed understanding of paedobaptism and its place within the believing community did not correspond

with that of Roman teaching, despite the appearance of common ritual elements used by both churches.

Differences on paedobaptism between the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries appear to lie more centrally in the question of the rite as a sign and seal of God’s promise of grace. In the Reformed tradition, infant baptism is not essential to salvation, since it can not bring about the assent of the individual to the action of God, i.e., it can not produce an act of faith. What is more, within Reformed theology, grace is presumed to be available to every child of a believing Christian, by virtue of being born into the covenant. Roman Catholic belief, in contrast, saw paedobaptism as the only path for the salvation for a child, who by definition is completely dependent upon the Church (as represented through parents and god-parents) but which professes faith on the infant’s behalf. In Catholic teaching, the rite of baptism accomplishes *ex opere operato* what it signifies, because of the intention to do what the churches does in obedience to Christ.

It is noteworthy that while the Council of Trent addressed issues of grace and its effects on a personal profession of faith (Session 6, *Decree on Justification*, chapter 5; canon 3; Session 6, chapter 16), none of the canons relative to the shape of baptism proper reflect this discussion. In effect, it appears that the reform of the rites of baptism as directed by the Council and implemented by successive popes proceeded without reference to this issue in its unresolved state with the Reformed churches. Instead, the entire controversy, with its immense implications, is left outside of the Roman Catholic sacramental reform.

The result was predictable: a slow but steady articulation of baptism in the Reformed churches generated a change of shape in their baptismal rites, while little perceptible change occurred in the Roman Rite, which maintained its distance from the Reformed churches’ questions. Even when the Reformation as a whole gained momentum throughout Europe, the Catholic Reform appeared to insulate its sacramental reforms from the influence of the debates on covenant theology, free will and prevenient grace, so crucial to subsequent liturgical development in the Reformed Churches.

As the accompanying “Comparative Chart on the Shape of Roman Catholic Baptismal Rites Between 1543 and 1614” demonstrates, local baptismal rites such as found in England (Sarum Rite) in 1543, changed only slightly between the time of the Reformation and the implementation of the sacramental reforms introduced by the Council of Trent. The effort of both of the reforming popes who followed Trent – Pius V, pope from 1566 to 1572, and Paul V, pope from 1605 to 1621 -- was to strengthen Catholic rites against doctrinal error and to bring them gradually into greater uniformity with Roman practice. As a result, the overall effect of the Council’s changes on the Sarum rite was minimal. Ironically, the Reformation of the Church of England would use this same Sarum Rite as the basis of many of its own liturgies, as found, for example, in the baptismal ceremony included in the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer (1549).

**4. d. Comparative Chart on the Shape of
Roman Catholic Baptismal Rites
Between 1543 and 1614**

Sarum Rite of Baptism on the eve of the Reformation in England (1543)	Roman Rite of Baptism revised by Paul V following the Council of Trent (1614)
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The following rite of baptism can be found in the Sarum Manual printed in Rouen in 1543, the final edition of its kind for use in England before the break with Rome and the issuance of the Book of Common Prayer in 1549. As such, the Sarum rite given here represents the shape of the baptismal rite before a universal rite for baptism would be imposed by Rome following the Council of Trent.

I Entrance Rites

- A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church
- B. Signing of the head and chest of the baptizand; giving of name by godparents
- C. Exorcism of salt
- D. Giving of salt to baptizand
- E. Prayer for assignment of guardian angel
- F. Exorcism
- G. Ephphetha ceremony
- H. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents

II Rites at the Baptismal Font

- O. Recitation of Our Father, Hail Mary and Creed by godparents
- P. Litany of the Saints
- Q. Blessing of water in the font
- R. Mixing of oil and chrism with baptismal water
- S. Renunciation of Satan by godparents
- T. Anointing with oil of catechumens

- U. Baptismal promises taken by godparents
- V. Baptism
- W. Anointing with chrism
- X. Clothing with white garment
- Y. Presentation of lighted candle
- Z. Confirmation, if a bishop is present
- AA. Giving of holy communion, if baptizand is at least seven years of age
- BB. Reading of the Gospel of Mark 9.17-29; reading of prologue

The following rite of baptism was placed in the ritual of Pope Paul V (1614) and formed by taking the adult rite of baptism and abbreviating it for use with an infant. This rite became the most widely used one for infant baptism between 1614 and the reforms introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1969. Adult baptism was not reconsidered within the Roman Rite until the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972).

I Entrance Rites

- A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church
- B. Minor exorcism
- C. Exsufflation and the signing of the baptizand's forehead
- D. The imposition of hands
- E. Blessing of baptizand with salt on the tongue
- F. Exorcism

II Rites at Entrance to Baptistry

- A. Recitation of the creed by parents and godparents
- B. Exorcism
- C. Ephphetha ceremony
- D. Renunciation of Satan answered by godparents
- E. Anointing with oil of catechumens

III Rites at the Font

- A. Baptismal promises taken on behalf of the baptizand
- B. Baptism
- C. Anointing with chrism
- D. Clothing with white garment
- E. Lighting of baptismal candle

Source: A.J. Collins, <i>Manuale ad usum percelebris ecclesiae Sarisburiensis</i> (Henry Bradshaw Society, XCIX). 1960	Source: Paulus V, <i>Rituale Romanum</i> (1614)
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4. e. Development of baptismal rites after the Reformation: i. Reformed

Narrating the development of baptismal rites in the Reformed tradition from the sixteenth century to the present presents a particular challenge. First, the Reformed tradition is not a single church with a single rite, but a family of churches with common theological convictions that developed different practices in various parts of Europe and North America (for purposes of this document, we will not recount the history of Reformed churches in other parts of the world). Second, baptismal rites have held different authority in different Reformed churches; e.g. the Dutch Reformed churches have tended to adopt official liturgies which are required for use, while churches stemming from the Westminster Directory tradition have tended to adopt official guidelines for liturgical practice that permit significant flexibility in the details. For these reasons, what follows is not intended to be comprehensive, but suggestive of the general trajectories of development in baptismal practice in Reformed churches during this period.

As noted earlier, baptismal practice in the Dutch Reformed churches remained relatively stable from 1566 until the liturgical revisions of the 20th century. For the Reformed churches in North America that trace their roots to Great Britain, the most significant liturgical development in the 17th century was in England with the introduction of the Westminster Directory for Worship.

The Westminster Directory for Worship (1645) begins its section on baptism with a statement that it is not to be unnecessarily delayed nor administered in private, but only by a “Minister of Christ” and “in the place of Publique Worship, and in the face of the congregation, where the people may most conveniently see and heare.”^{xi} The pattern is similar to the order of baptism in Genevan liturgy, with lengthy instruction, exhortation of parents, scriptural warrant, and prayer preceding water baptism. New in this rite is the explicit admonition of the congregation “to improve and make the right use of their baptisme,” a theme that was at best only implicit in 16th century rites. According to Stan Hall, “two features of this Directory rite, parental promise and use of scriptural warrant, set the precedent for virtually all of the later Presbyterian baptismal rites.”^{xiii} Another feature of this rite that lingered until the mid-20th century is the insistence that the minister was to baptize without any additional ceremony (e.g., no consignation¹²). This Westminster form, revised slightly, prevailed in Presbyterian churches in the U.S. until the early 20th century.

The scriptural warrant, already present in the 16th century rites, exemplifies the Reformed concern for the *centrality of the Word* in connection with the sacrament. The stipulation that baptism is to be done “without additional ceremony” echoes the focus on *water* as the primary symbolic element, signifying both God’s grace of forgiveness and the giving of the Holy Spirit. The admonition of the congregation signals the *ecclesial setting* so important to Reformed baptismal understanding, and the exhortation to parents embodies the *link between baptism and ongoing nurture* in the faith. Thus all of the major themes that drove the 16th century reform

¹² Consignation means:

continued to shape baptismal practice in the Westminster Directory, even though there was a move away from authorized liturgies and toward increased local freedom in liturgical practice.

In 1788, the newly formed Presbyterian Church in the United States adopted a revised version of the Westminster Directory for Worship.^{xiii} This version introduced two changes to the 1645 text. First, the American Directory added a chapter on integrating baptized children and previously unbaptized persons into the communion of the church. This shows new attention to the connection between baptism, catechesis, and the Lord's Supper, as well as growing awareness of the possibility of adults presenting themselves for baptism. Previously unbaptized persons were to be accepted following baptism and public profession of faith. Second, the American version removed the detailed descriptions of prayers which had been in 1645 version, so the description of the rite (though not necessarily the rite itself) was briefer than in the original.

On the American frontier, baptism came to be associated with evangelical conversion, especially during the second Great Awakening. American Reformed churches reacted to this movement in various ways. Some (like New England Congregationalist Horace Bushnell in his treatise *Christian Nurture*) strengthened their defense of infant baptism, arguing that faith is best nurtured in the context of families rather than expecting sudden conversion. Bushnell and others emphasized the connection between *baptism and ongoing nurture*, a theme that had been prominent in Reformed baptismal practice since the 16th century. However, with more adults coming for baptism who had not been baptized as infants, Reformed churches were also compelled to address the practice of adult baptism. This growing interest can be seen in several 19th century Reformed liturgical publications (including Charles Shields' 1864 republication of the 1661 Savoy Liturgy "in agreement with the Directory for Public Worship,"^{xiv} the 1868 Directory of the United Presbyterian Church of North America,^{xv} and the 1894 PCUS Directory for Worship^{xvi}).

In addition, the 19th century saw increased interest in set forms for worship, perhaps in response to freedom of the revival tradition and the minimalism of the 1788 Presbyterian Directory. This movement is evident in the introduction of set baptismal forms in various revisions of the Directory for Worship (the 1894 PCUS Directory^{xvii} and the PCUSA Directory^{xviii}), and also in the Mercersburg movement in the German Reformed church, a predecessor tradition of the United Church of Christ. This movement, centered in the Reformed seminary at Mercersburg, Pennsylvania, was led particularly by theologian John Williamson Nevin. Though it did not have a broad effect on German Reformed church practice at the time, Mercersburg represented a desire to claim a sacramental theology and practice more deeply informed by both early and Reformation church sources. Furthermore, in the last half of the 20th century, the Mercersburg movement re-emerged as a significant influence on many Reformed churches in this dialogue seeking to recover a deeper appreciation of liturgical forms and of the centrality of the sacraments.^{xix}

Another concern that continued in some Reformed churches was the connection of prayer with the water of baptism. While the 1645 Westminster Directory had said that prayer "was to be joined with the word of institution, for sanctifying the water to this spiritual use," no mention of water appeared in Presbyterian Directories until the mid-20th century, out of concern for too high a regard for the efficacy of the sign itself.^{xx}

Reformed baptismal practices in the 19th century thus showed general continuity with practices of prior centuries, with emerging attention to adult baptism, increased usage of set

liturgical forms in a tradition that did not require them, and some renewed attention to the water itself in the prayer at baptism.

In the early twentieth century, both major streams of the Dutch-American Reformed tradition revised their baptismal rites, but these did not significantly change the existing practices of baptism. The Reformed Church in America (RCA) approved a new abridged form for baptism in 1906, though the older unabridged form also continued to be printed.^{xxi} This follows closely the 1566 order, though the prayer in this revised version now precedes the instruction. In 1912, the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) translated the 1566 baptismal order into English, but continued to use that same liturgy until the 1960s.

4. e. Development of baptismal rites after the Reformation:

ii. Roman Catholic

As the centuries following Trent drew the Catholic Church into the modern period, her baptismal liturgy remained fixed in form through the final revisions made by Paul V in the *Rituale Romanum* of 1614. Even as the Second Vatican Council approached its opening days in 1962, there was little public discussion of the need for the reform of baptism in particular, though other sacraments such as Eucharist had been widely considered from this point of view (see Annibale Bugnini, *The Reform of the Liturgy* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990] 5-13). This, despite work done locally in the church in France, highlighting the need to revive a more meaningful catechumenate drawn from the example of adult believership in the early church (see e.g., Alois Stenzel, *Die Taufe: eine genetische Erklärung der Tauf liturgie* [Verlag Felizian Rauch, Innsbruck, 1958] or Burhard Neunheuser, *Baptism and Confirmation*, trans. J.J. Hughes [Herder and Herder, New York 1964]).

Meanwhile in the Reformed Churches, a highly influential discussion on baptism, its form and theology had emerged between theologians such as Karl Barth (*The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism*, trans. Ernst A. Payne [London, SCM Press, 1948]) and Oscar Cullmann (*Baptism in the New Testament*, trans. J.K.S. Reid [London: SCM Press, 1950]). The influence of this discussion can be seen especially on baptismal documents in Presbyterian churches in the 1970s. However, the work of these two giants would not influence the Concilium reformers, first assembled in 1965, who were yet several years away from issuing a revised order of infant baptism in 1969. Instead, Roman Catholic reform concentrated on the pastoral need for an adult catechumenate based on a new reading of relevant biblical and patristic sources, while the Reformed Church explored further the larger question of baptism's meaning in connection with the act of adult faith.

On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, then, both communities were ready to inaugurate a process of recovering meaning from ancient sources, hoping thereby to recover a more authentic practice and understanding of baptism. Both communities focused their attention on biblical and patristic texts and rites as a point of departure for ritual reforms. As it turned out, however, both Churches were poised to look at the same sources but in answer to different questions, with different points of departure, theological hermeneutics and methods. As a result, the emergence of baptismal rites which share many common features in both communities, nonetheless appear to reflect differing theological understandings, thus raising the question of the extent to which theological divergences need further exploration.

4 f. 20th century convergence in scholarship and ritual structures: i. Reformed

In 1957, two streams of the Reformed church family, the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, came together to form the United Church of Christ (UCC). This new church, bringing together both New England Congregationalism with its Puritan heritage and German Reformed Protestantism with its Pietist heritage, has been ecumenically oriented from the beginning. Though congregations are free to shape liturgical forms at the local level, the UCC as a denomination has attended closely to the ecumenical biblical and historical scholarship that led to the liturgical renewal movement of the 1960s and 1970s. This ecumenical commitment significantly shaped the order of baptism found in the 1986 *Book of Worship*. In fact, the Order of Baptism “rests significantly on an ecumenical liturgical consensus found in the 1982 *Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry* (BEM) document more than on any one former tradition.”^{xxii} Though not required for use, this 1986 liturgical resource reflects Reformed baptismal themes that have been central since the 16th century: connection of baptism with proclamation of the Word; focus on water as the central symbol of baptism^{xxiii}; ecclesial setting of baptism; and connection of baptism with ongoing nurture, signified by congregational promises and the option of including baptismal sponsors in the service.

In the 1960s, both the CRCNA and the RCA moved to revise their rites more substantially than they had done ever before. The RCA in 1968 adopted revised rites after several years of drafting and evaluation of provisional orders.^{xxiv} The CRC, a few years later in 1976, adopted a similar revised order.^{xxv} Both revised orders reflect similar concerns: to state more clearly the biblical institution for baptism, to present more clearly the covenantal basis for baptism, and to make more explicit the congregation’s responsibility to nurture baptized children.^{xxvi}

Though the RCA published another alternate order for baptism in *Worship the Lord* in 1987, the next major revision of the baptismal forms came in 1994, for both the RCA and the CRC. It is significant that in both cases, there is a single form or outline provided, which can be used for either infant or adult baptism. There are no longer two separate rites.^{xxvii} This is particularly striking, since the Roman Catholic revisions of this era went in the opposite direction, clarifying two different orders for infant and adult baptism. The CRC form is explicitly intended to be more flexible, permitting local adaptation. Both of these recent baptismal orders reflect awareness of the ecumenical liturgical movement, with greater attention to the symbolic value of water and inclusion of ancient elements such as renunciations, affirmations, and a prayer of thanksgiving over the water. At the same time, these new rites show continuing Reformed sensibilities in their opening words of institution, their emphasis on covenant, and the inclusion of promises by both parents/baptizands and congregation to nurture the baptized in the faith. This theme of baptismal nurture has been present in Reformed baptismal rites since the 16th century, and has only gotten stronger in recent years.

In the Presbyterian stream of North American Reformed churches, there have been two interwoven liturgical developments in the 20th century: revisions to the Directory for Worship, the constitutional document governing worship in Presbyterian churches, and revisions to the Book of Common Worship, a liturgical resource recommended but not required for use in Presbyterian churches. These two documents have not always developed in tandem, but by the end of the 20th century, they came to express common understanding of the theology and the

practice of baptism.

In the early part of the 20th century, the official Directory for Worship in the major Presbyterian denominations described a baptismal theology and practice nearly identical to the Westminster Directory of 1645, as abbreviated in America in 1788. Even as this Directory pattern remained in place, liturgical resources approved by the church began to appear for the first time in the Book of Common Worship (hereafter BCW) of 1906, with revisions in 1932 and 1946. Over the first half of the 20th century, baptismal rites in the BCW showed increased involvement of the congregation, increased attention to congregational nurture of the baptized, increased attention to the Christological basis of baptism, and a decrease in instruction and exhortation, with corresponding expansion of the prayer before baptism. These shifts in baptismal patterns in the BCW were eventually reflected in the Directory for Worship as well.

During the 1960s and 1970s, revisions to both Directory and worship resources continued to show the effects of ecumenical liturgical scholarship, particularly the movement toward a single baptismal service suitable, with modification, for both adults and infants, and the move (in 1971) to link baptism more closely to admission to the table. In 1970, the *Worshipbook* provided a single baptismal service that required modification to adapt it for infants. In 1971, a revision of the UPCUSA Directory introduced a major change, affirming that baptism alone admits one to the Lord's Supper (no longer requiring public profession of faith at "confirmation"). Both of these moves reflect ecumenical liturgical scholarship of the time, the first being an effort to make baptism more clearly a single rite, whether for adults or infants, and the second an effort to reflect the early church connection of baptism with celebration of the Lord's Supper.

A substantial 1973 revision to the UPCUSA Directory claimed that "baptism marks a new beginning of participation in Christ's ministry for all people." The theological foundation for baptism was now Jesus' own baptism (rather than the covenant of God or forgiveness/cleansing). This shift of emphasis has continued into current Directory statements on baptism. The doctrinal portion of the chapter on baptism, however, introduced a more dramatic and controversial change. It suggested "two equally appropriate occasions for baptism—either at infancy, or in later years at the emergence of personal faith." This reflects the influence of Barth's theology in *The Teaching of the Church Regarding Baptism* (1965), in which he argued that baptism of mature Christians reflects more clearly the meaning of baptism than does baptism of infants. Here for the first time in U.S. Reformed churches, "believer baptism" was recognized as a possibility for persons raised within the church. This language remained for only a few years in the Directory, but reveals much ferment in baptismal reflection and practice among Presbyterian churches at that time.

In 1983, reunion of the two former denominations to form the present PC(USA) prompted the need for a new Directory for Worship. That Directory, adopted in 1989, is the current constitutional document guiding worship life in the PC(USA). The outline of the baptismal rite in this Directory is identical to the pattern in BCW 1993^{xxviii}. The other significant change in the 1989 Directory is the inclusion of blessing and optional anointing. Though the 1989 Directory includes a caution that nothing should overshadow the central act of baptizing with water, other actions "deeply rooted in the history of baptism" are permitted.^{xxix} The 1946 BCW had introduced a Trinitarian blessing following water baptism, but this 1989 development elaborates on that practice, a clear attempt to move toward a shared ecumenical pattern informed by early church baptismal practice. The service of baptism in the 1993 BCW, which is provided

in the appendix and discussed in more detail below, parallels the 1989 Directory, though the terminology is slightly different.

Method in reform of Reformed baptismal rites

The revisions of Reformed baptismal rites in the 20th century have proceeded differently for the bodies represented in this dialogue. However, they have shared concerns to promote 1) fuller participation of the people, 2) greater attention to the symbolic use of water, and 3) greater appreciation for baptism as central to Christian identity, a mark that both distinguishes the church from the world and calls the church into mission in and for the world.

While the Roman Catholic church has placed a central focus on the restoration of the ancient catechumenate in its baptismal reforms since Vatican II, Reformed churches have focused on revisions of the central baptismal rites and services of reaffirmation or renewal of baptism. In addition, some Reformed churches have begun exploring the possibilities of the catechumenate model as a process of forming new Christians and reiterating baptism as a central symbol of Christian identity. For many Reformed Christians, the catechumenate holds promise for the following reasons:

- It focuses on baptism, which has been a central Reformation “mark of the church”.
- It brings people by stages into the church, providing liturgical boundary markers to celebrate the gradual inclusion of the new Christian into the body of Christ.
- It provides a clear structure for accompanying people along the life of faith, through sponsors, catechists, and the whole congregation praying for the catechumens.
- It is ritually full, something that many seekers and church members are hungering for. The process of leading someone to baptism—and leading a congregation to repeated reaffirmations of that baptism—involves the whole person, body, mind, and soul.

As Reformed Christians continue the work of adapting the catechumenate model to a Reformed context, several issues are emerging as central to our reflection:

- *God's grace and human response.* The chief issue in Reformed baptismal discussion generally continues to be how to maintain our historic emphasis on baptism as God's gracious action while also attending to the human dimension of the sacrament. Faithful Reformed people disagree on how to manage this balance. This basic issue underlies many of the particular questions that arise in baptismal debates: for instance, when is it permissible to refuse to baptize someone? Is any such refusal a denial of the generosity of God's grace? With regard to the catechumenate, how much should we require of those preparing for baptism? Should catechesis precede or follow the act of baptism? Baptism is God's act of cleansing, redeeming, and renewing, and it is also the welcoming of a new Christian into community. Reformed theology always encourages attention first to God's action, but there is increased concern about how persons receive God's action -- how God works not only in the act of baptism narrowly construed, but also through the life of the community of faith to form new Christians in lives of gratitude. Some Reformed object to the language of

“Christian initiation,” claiming that such a term focuses too much on the human community into which one is initiated at baptism. This discomfort points to the debate in the Reformed tradition over how to maintain a focus on the radical priority of God’s action while also attending to the shape of human living in response to that grace.

- A related question is the relationship between *baptism and faithful living*. How is baptism related to sanctification, the ongoing life of faith? The promises of nurture made by the congregation at an infant’s baptism are necessary, but not sufficient to answer this question. Some Reformed Christians are seeking to recover Calvin’s emphasis on the link between baptism and “discipline,” the structure of the faithful life. This moves the discussion from the question of what constitutes valid baptism (which allows for minimalist celebration) to how baptism shapes a life of faithfulness (which focuses on a more expansive process of preparation for and celebration of baptism). The Reformed understanding of discipline may provide a way to talk about catechumenate in a Reformed context, and it may also constitute a fruitful contribution to the ecumenical conversation about Christian initiation.

Conclusions regarding Reformed practices of baptism

Though Reformed churches over the course of 500 years have exhibited diversity of baptismal practice and theology, an examination of baptismal liturgies suggests continuing consensus on the four themes that shaped Reformed baptismal concerns in the 16th century:

- Focus on the *Word of God* as that which joins us to the body of Christ. The intimate connection of baptism with the proclamation of the Word has been maintained steadily for five centuries, as has the commitment to communicate the significance of baptism in the language of the people.
- *Centrality of water*. If anything, this emphasis has grown more clear in recent years, with increased attention to the symbolic value of water and a shared appreciation for the connection of baptismal water with biblical narratives of creation, flood, and exodus, as well as Jesus’ own baptism. Though some Reformed churches now permit and even embrace additional symbols such as post-baptismal anointing (a change from 16th century practice), these additional acts are always connected to the central symbol of water.
- *Ecclesial dimension* of baptism: Since the 16th century there has been gradual movement toward greater congregational involvement, as embodied in the congregational promises included in all the current Reformed rites. This is in keeping with the impulse to understand baptism as an ecclesial act.
- Connection of *baptism and nurture*: in the 16th and 17th centuries this was often embodied in extended exhortations to the parents (and godparents/sponsors) to raise their baptized children in the faith. Contemporary baptismal rites have moved away from such exhortation, but continue to emphasize the importance of ongoing nurture of the baptized through promises made by congregations, parents, and baptismal sponsors, as well as post-baptismal prayers for continued growth in faith.

At the same time, the 20th century has brought some significant shifts in Reformed baptismal practice, particularly the move from ordinance to symbol as the primary lens for understanding sacramental practice in general, and baptism in particular. One result of this shift is the diminished length of time devoted to instruction on the nature of baptism in the context of the liturgy, and (most recently) the increased focus on prayers over the water, shifting the tone of the event from teaching to proclamation and prayer.

4. f. 20th century convergence in scholarship and ritual structures:

ii. Roman Catholic

Overview of the reform of Roman Catholic baptismal rites following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965)

The reform of the Roman Rite that began in 1963 with the promulgation of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (SC) at the Second Vatican Council was unique in Catholic liturgical history. Its starting point was a generalized desire to see the participation of the faithful as its goal. In most previous reforms, the liturgy was changed to accommodate a development in the articulation of dogma, such as with the addition of language to the Nicene Creed to clearly state belief in the dual natures of Christ as God and man. However, in her most recent renewal of liturgical life, the Roman Catholic Church sought to examine liturgical celebrations in answer to the question, How can these rites be made more accessible to the participation of the lay faithful ?

This intention was made clear in the language of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, 14 which set “full, conscious and active participation” of the faithful as the end and goal of the process of revision which would follow. This reform, then, was undertaken essentially for pastoral reasons, emphasizing, in turn, that all liturgical renewal was ordered to bring about a deepening of the life of the Church itself (SC, 14).

The reform of the Roman Rite on this occasion was guided by nine important principles, each found within the Council documents:

(1) that liturgy sanctifies every event in the life of the faithful “with the divine grace which flows from the paschal mystery of the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Christ” (SC no. 61; see also no. 5).

(2) that liturgy must be understood as the “source and summit” of the life of the Church (SC no. 10, *Lumen Gentium*, 11), rather than as a mere external act unessential to her life and mission in the world;

(3) that every rite should enhance the full, conscious, and active participation of minister and faithful alike (SC 14, 21, 30) and to promote this participation by the faithful, liturgical education is to be assiduously pursued (see SC nos. 14-20);

(4) that all liturgical acts are communal and ecclesial by nature and should be celebrated accordingly (SC, 26);

(5) that liturgical celebrations should aim for unity but not uniformity from one local church to another (SC, 23, 37-38);

(6) that whatever changes were effected, they should in some way be an “organic growth” (SC, 23) in harmony with the history and theology of the liturgy in the Latin West;

(7) that each reformed rite should recover the primary role of the celebration of the Word of God as its foundation (SC, 7, 24, 35, 51, 56);

(8) that rites should be appropriately simplified, reducing, for example, wherever necessary, redundancies and superfluties which could distract from the essential meaning of the liturgy (SC, 34, 50) and

(9) that the entire reform should be guided by the tradition of Christian life and worship as found in biblical and patristic sources (SC, 50).

Specific Issues in the Reform of the Baptismal Rites following Vatican II

Several issues governed the reform of Roman Catholic baptismal rites following the Second Vatican Council. Each of these would help to answer a variety of pastoral and historical questions about the shape and use of the rites for the Church in the modern world. Principal among these was the restoration of an adult catechumenate and baptism through the implementation of the *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA). At the same time, infant baptism was reformed to distinguish it more clearly from the adult rite. Hence, the re-orientation of both rites relative to each other became a major feature of the reform of baptism since the Second Vatican Council.

The RCIA retrieved much of the understanding of gradual conversion found in the rites of the catechumenate in the early church. The reformed rites of 1972 restore this same emphasis on conversion and initiation into Christian life as a “process” rather a single, discrete act. Accordingly, the reformers of the initiation rites sought to re-establish baptism as the gateway sacrament to the other rites of the Church.

The RCIA now includes four continuous periods in the life of the candidate: (1) period of evangelization and pre-catechumenate, in which the candidate explores the message of the Gospel and its values under the direction of a deacon, priest or catechist, who invites the interested party to join in prayer and the reading of the Scriptures on a regular basis; (2) the catechumenate, in which candidates express a clear intention to seek baptism, as the Church responds by accepting them into a structured process of conversion which assists them towards this goal; (3) period of purification and enlightenment, usually during Lent, in which the elect more immediately and intensely prepare for initiation; and (4) the celebration of the sacraments of initiation (namely, baptism, confirmation and Eucharist), which is followed by *mystagogia* or a final period of post-baptismal catechesis on the rites and growth in the faith. In the catechumenate proper, frequent celebrations of the word of God, of prayers of exorcism and blessing, and then of the more formal steps of the rite of enrollment and election are mandated.

Immediately before baptism is celebrated – usually during the period of Lent which precedes Holy Saturday and the Easter Vigil – the candidates enter their final stage of preparation known as “scrutinies”. This last step is built around intense prayer, strengthened by exorcism, to assist the candidates to put aside all sinful ways and to grow in their desire for life in Christ. During the scrutinies, customarily celebrated during the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Sundays of Lent, the Creed and the Lord’s Prayer are presented to the candidates for their close study and memorization, to be publicly professed before the day of baptism. On Holy Saturday, catechumens complete a less formal set of rites known as “Rites of Preparation” which help them to be ready for the sacraments they will receive that same night at the Easter Vigil. A brief outline of the reformed rites for adult catechumenate and baptism (RCIA) is given here:

Chart of the RCIA Rites of 1972

#	Rites and Stages of RCIA (<i>Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults</i>) 1972
1	<p>Pre-Catechumenate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Period of evangelization and exploration of Christian life B. Informal welcoming into a Catholic community C. Instruction and prayer, together with exorcism offered on a regular basis D. Episcopal conferences may devise an informal way in which to recognize and accept the personal intention of the interested party to pursue baptism; no formal rites to be used at this stage
2	<p>Catechumenate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Rite of acceptance into the Order of Catechumens <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Reception of candidates at the door of the church at the start of Sunday Mass B. Greeting of candidates C. Opening dialogue of candidates called by name D. Affirmation by sponsors E. Signing of the foreheads of the candidates F. Concluding prayer G. Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass H. Presentation of a bible and cross to candidates with optional exsufflation and exorcism I. Prayers for new catechumens J. Dismissal of catechumens before Liturgy of the Eucharist B. Rites belonging to the period of the Catechumenate celebrated during Sunday Mass <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Celebration of the Word of God B. Minor exorcisms C. Prayer of blessings over the catechumens D. Anointing of catechumens E. Rites of Election or Enrollment of Names <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Liturgy of the Word at Sunday Mass b. Homily c. Presentation of the catechumens by sponsors d. Affirmation of the godparents e. Invitation and enrollment of names of catechumens f. Act of admission or election g. Intercessions for the elect h. Prayer over the elect i. Dismissal of the elect from the assembly before the celebration of the Liturgy of the Eucharist

	<p>F. Period of Purification and Enlightenment</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Third Sunday of Lent: First Scrutiny <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Liturgy of the Word ii. Homily iii. Presentation of the Creed iv. Exorcism v. Dismissal of the elect b. Fourth Sunday of Lent: Second Scrutiny <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. (as above for first scrutiny) c. Fifth Sunday of Lent: Third Scrutiny <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. (as above for first and second scrutinies) ii. Presentation of the Lord's Prayer to the catechumen <p>G. Preparation Rites on Holy Saturday during the day</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Recitation of the Creed b. Reading from Scripture c. Homily d. Prayer before recitation e. Recitation of the Lord's Prayer f. Ephphetha rite g. Choosing of baptismal name by the catechumen h. Blessing prayer i. Dismissal
3	<p>Rites of Baptism, Confirmation and Eucharist at the Easter Vigil</p> <p>A. Following the Liturgy of the Word proper, the rites of baptism and confirmation</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presentation of the catechumens 2. Invitation to prayer 3. Litany of the saints 4. Prayer over the water 5. Profession of faith 6. Renunciation of sin 7. Baptism 8. Anointing 9. Clothing with a white garment 10. Presentation of lighted candle 11. Confirmation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. invitation and prayer b. laying on of hands c. anointing with chrism

4.	<p>Period of Mystagogia or Post-baptismal Catechesis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. This period is to be marked by intense prayer and the practice of Christian living in the lives of the catechumens B. No formal rites are prescribed for this period C. Sunday Masses in the Easter Season have been customarily devoted to gatherings of the newly baptized in which the entire community that has received them affirms and supports their new life in Christ D. Bishops are encouraged to meet with the baptized for anniversary celebrations of their baptism E. Godparents are reminded of their on-going duty to support the Christian life of their godchildren
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On the eve of the Second Vatican Council, the baptismal rites in place in 1962 had concentrated the attention of the faithful more on the personal rather than the communal or ecclesial nature of worship. Hence, both infant and adult baptisms were regularly held outside of the celebration of Eucharist, most often for the immediate family only. These same tendencies characterized much of the sacramental celebration of the Roman Rite at the time. With the advent of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, however, the fundamentally ecclesial nature of the liturgy – and hence, the demand for its public and communal celebration – was recovered as a part of the liturgical reform. Accordingly, in the revised rites, the celebration of baptism of infants within Sunday Mass (Baptism of Children, no. 9) and the celebration of adult baptisms at the Easter Vigil (RCIA no. 17, 23) are now considered normative.

The uniting of the sacraments of baptism and confirmation, now taken as normative, is among the feature of the RCIA which re-introduce profoundly traditional and pneumatological elements into the reformed rites. The reform thus attempts to strengthen the paschal nature of the sacrament of baptism (see RCIA nos. 4, 8; Baptism for Children no. 9). Finally, the new rites make clear that pre-baptismal and post-baptismal life in the Church differs radically according to the experience of the baptized and their community; hence, catechesis appropriate to each must be continually developed.

Along with the restoration of the adult catechumenate (RCIA) and adult baptism, the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council also revised the rites of infant baptism to reflect more clearly how the rite was intended for those who could not speak for themselves and, as such, was an act of the family and the community that supported them. The text of *Sacrosanctum Concilium* itself called for a three-fold reform of the rites along these pastoral lines: “The rite for the baptism of infants is to be revised, and should be adapted to the circumstance that those to be baptized are, in fact, infants. The roles of parents and godparents, and also their duties, should be brought out more sharply in the rite itself. The baptismal rite should contain adaptations, to be used at the discretion of the local ordinary, for occasions when a very large number are to be baptized together. Moreover, a shorter rite is to be drawn up, especially for mission lands, for use by catechists, but also by the faithful in general when there is danger of death, and neither priest nor deacon is available” (SC, 68, 69).

In contrast to the reform of infant baptism drawn up by the popes who implemented the directives of the Council of Trent, the revised rites of infant baptism of 1969 show marked differences over those of 1614. A brief comparative chart is given here of the two rites.

**Comparative Chart of the Rites of
Infant Baptism, 1614 and 1969**

Rite of Infant Baptism, 1614	Rite of Infant Baptism, 1969
<p><i>The following rite of baptism was placed in the ritual of Pope Paul V (1614) and formed by taking the adult rite of baptism and abbreviating it for use with an infant. This rite became the most widely used one for infant baptism between 1614 and the reforms introduced by Pope Paul VI in 1969. Adult baptism as a frequent practice did not re-emerge in the Roman Rite until the promulgation of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (1972).</i></p> <p>I Entrance Rites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Interrogatories at the door of the Church of parents and godparents B. Minor exorcism C. Exsufflation and the signing of the baptizand's forehead D. The imposition of hands E. Blessing of baptizand with salt F. Exorcism <p>II Rites at Entrance to Baptistry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Recitation of the creed by parents and godparents B. Exorcism C. Ephphetha ceremony D. Renunciation of Satan answered by godparents E. Anointing with oil of catechumens 	<p><i>The following rite was promulgated in 1969 and was meant to highlight those elements of reform directed by the Second Vatican Council in SC 68 and 69. Its use is separate from that of the rite for baptism of adults; the two may never be interchanged. The usual place for the celebration of infant baptism is the Sunday Mass of the community into which the child is baptized and which parents live.</i></p> <p>I Entrance Rites</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Greeting at the door of the Church B. Interrogatories of parents and godparents C. Signing of the forehead of the infant by parents and godparents

<p>III Rites at the Font</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Baptismal promises taken on behalf of the infant B. Baptism C. Anointing with chrism D. Clothing with white garment E. Lighting of baptismal candle 	<p>II Rites at the font during Sunday Mass</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Liturgy of the Word B. Intercessions C. Litany of the saints D. Exorcism E. Anointing with oil F. Blessing of the water G. Renunciation of sin H. Baptismal promises taken on behalf of the infant I. Profession of faith by parents and godparents J. Baptism K. Anointing with chrism L. Clothing with white garment M. Presentation of lighted candle N. Ephephata ceremony
<p>Source: Paulus V, <i>Rituale Romanum</i> (1614)</p>	<p>Source: Paulus VI, <i>Ordo Baptismi Parvulorum</i> (1969)</p>

The essential differences between the rites reformed by the Council of Trent and those of the Second Vatican Council are three: (1) infant baptism is set within a celebration of the Liturgy of the Word, ideally found within the celebration of the Sunday Eucharist of the family's home community; (2) exorcism is de-emphasized and (3) the shortened rites of 1969 focus the attention of the parents and godparents on their acts of faith and renunciation of the devil as essential prerequisites to the baptismal act itself. In effect, without the faith of the parents and godparents who support the infant, baptism loses its essential meaning as a sacrament of faith professed (by the adult candidate) or spoken for (in the case of a child). It is also evident that the main lines of this rite remain unchanged from its predecessor of nearly 500 years.

In addition, the reformed rites for infant baptism also helped to clarify the roles of the godparents as secondary to those of the parents who must function as first teachers of the faith to their children (see Baptism for Children, nos. 5, 6). Godparents supply this need when parents can no longer provide it. Lastly, the rites now emphasize what can be called the "paschal character" of baptism, i.e., the celebration of baptism as an entrance into the mystery of Christ's own death and resurrection to the Father, cleansing the child of original sin and orienting it to a new life in Christ, strengthened for the profession of faith and the practice of virtue (see SC no. 6; LG no. 1). This same conscious emphasis on the paschal character of every sacrament has been made explicit in all the reformed rites and texts of the liturgy since the Second Vatican Council.

In sum, the reform of the rites of baptism within the Roman Catholic Church have been conducted with careful attention to restoring them to a communal setting within which the Liturgy of the Word is an essential component, and the profession of faith by the Church suffuses the celebration for all involved. Finally, cultural adaptation of the rites is permitted according to guidelines given both by the Holy See and the local Episcopal conference (SC 63, 64, 65), including the formation of a rite for the reception of already baptized persons into full communion with the Catholic Church.

Pre and post baptismal rites

Roman Catholic baptismal rites include both pre-baptismal and post-baptismal elements which help to prepare for and delineate the mystery experienced in baptism. In effect, the pre-baptismal rites within the RCIA are intended, as described above, to invite and stimulate a desire for God, membership in Christ's body, the Church, and in the ability to profess faith (see LG no. 11 on the effects of baptism; see also Can. 849 in the 1983 Code of Canon Law). The "lead-up" of the extended catechumenate now in place in the reformed rites of adult baptism is the fertile ground for enabling the grace of baptism to take root deeply in the hearts of those well prepared to receive it. Conversion is work: none who desires to be baptized can be expected to prepare themselves apart from a community which will give them membership and belonging. The pre-baptismal rites also serve the valuable purpose of acquainting the catechumen with the community he or she will call "home" for at least some time through the period of *mystagogia*. Likewise, the community must prepare itself to admit new members and thereby deepen its own commitment by expanding yet again the boundaries of its love and mission.

The post baptismal elements, whether of the adult or infant rites, have a single overall purpose: they serve to unfold, explain and detail major aspects of what has just happened in water baptism. Though not essential to the sacramental action of God just experienced, they nevertheless make clear to all – minister, witnesses, family and community members – that the new Christian now enjoys the rights and obligations of membership in Christ's body.

When anointed with chrism, the newly baptized and confirmed are sealed in their priestly role to participate in the Eucharist and in their ability to share in marriage and Orders. Clothing with a white garment signals the beauty and sin-free quality of their new lives now lived in Christ, washed clean of original and actual sin. Like the linen garments worn by the baptized of long ago, white-colored clothing also serves as a reminder and pledge against the temptation to sin which will never leave their lives. The presentation of the lighted candle is a joining of their commitment to live according to the light of Christ as symbolized by the great Easter candle of the Vigil at which the adults were baptized. This candle also solemnizes their vow-taking, as marked in many other rites within the Roman Catholic Church either for weddings, monastic vows, the consecration of virgins or the annual renewal of baptismal promises at the Easter Vigil. Finally, the Ephphetha ceremony brings with it the special grace to hear the Word of God and speak it as a part of the mission and life of the baptized. With this rite, which orients the new believer to the preaching of the Word in life, word and deed, the rite for baptism closes on an evangelical in imitation of Christ who came to serve and not to be served (cf. Mt. 20.28).

Method in the Reform of the Roman Catholic Baptismal Rites

As mentioned above, the reform of the liturgy following the Second Vatican Council was done according to goals never before adopted in the Roman Catholic Church. Specifically, the revision of rites and texts was made with the overarching purpose of deepening the “full, conscious and active participation” of the faithful in the action of God present in the liturgy (SC, 14). Inherently, this goal carried new methodological considerations as well, demanding a theological and liturgical understanding of the rite and texts unlike what was previously needed.

The Council itself would give some direction for the development of this method in its statements that there was no further need for “uniformity” but only for “unity” in the reformed rites (SC, 23); that all of the existing rites from Trent should be, in effect, simplified and made easier and clearer for the faithful to understand (SC, 21, 50, 62), eliminating “elements which, with the passage of time, came to be duplicated, or were added with but little advantage” (SC, 50). Now the method of reform would demand a re-appreciation of the rites which concentrated on the needs of the believer through the lens of a relatively new category of analysis, i.e., of “participant” (cf. SC, 14) in the sacred mysteries.

Implicit within this discussion of enhanced participation within *Sacrosanctum Concilium* is a turn to the subjectivity of the believer interacting with the Church and Christ in the celebration of God’s action in rite and sacrament. The tools needed to complete this kind of reform would differ, however, from previous liturgical reforms introduced over the centuries. For in the past, the liturgy achieved its organic growth primarily from the development of doctrine in the face of schism, heresy or political strife. But the Second Vatican Council would thereby open a door to the organic growth in the liturgy centered upon the experience of the believer in the act of worship itself (cf. SC, 14: “This full and active sharing on the part of the whole people is of paramount concern in the process of renewing the liturgy and helping it to grow” / *Quae totius populi plena et actuosa participatio, in instauranda et fovenda sacra liturgia, summopere est attendenda*; SC, 23: “In order that healthy tradition can be preserved while yet allowing room for legitimate development, thorough investigation --- theological, historical and pastoral – of the individual parts of the liturgy up for revision is always to be the first step”/ *Ut sana traditio retineatur et tamen via legitimae progressionis aperiatur et adhibita cauta ut novae formae ex formis iam exstantibus organice quodammodo crescant*).

In SC, 23 the Roman Catholic Church introduced a series of methodological changes in establishing standards for organic growth within the liturgy which would startle many. There, she names five principles which directly affected the way in which the reform of the baptismal rites – either for adults or children – were accomplished. They include: (1) the preservation of tradition which yet allows for development through an historical, theological and pastoral understanding of the liturgy; (2) determining the general structure and intent of any part of the liturgy before revising it; (3) evaluating and using the experience of liturgical renewal and special concessions in the practice of the liturgy granted up until the Council, and even beyond, to guide the reform of the rites; (4) the grounding of all changes in “real and proven need” of the Church and (5) the promotion of continuity in liturgical growth from old to new forms.

These five points of method were only intensified with the final steps laid down by the Council in its listing of processes to be followed in the reform of the liturgy. For in sections 38 and 39 of *Sacrosanctum Concilium*, the Council states that adaptations of the liturgy according to

local cultures are permitted, and can be devised and then submitted by Episcopal conferences to the Holy See for approbation.

The effect of implementing these principles within the reform of the liturgy can be seen in the way in which the modern rites have been simplified and their new expression devised to reflect the proven tradition of the early church in which the deepening conversion of the believer was of great importance. However, the reform of the baptismal rites in the present case is based on work in the modern historical, theological, behavioral and pastoral sciences encouraged by the Council itself. No previous reform sought the same goals as did this one, nor achieved it with the tools unique to the modern age.

Chart with full texts of rites (see Appendix A)

4. g. Critical Comparison of Roman Catholic and Reformed Rites

A comparison of the current printed liturgies of Reformed and Roman Catholic churches in this dialogue reveal strong similarities, arising from the common ecumenical liturgical movement of the 20th century, which itself emerged from shared biblical and historical scholarship in the early part of the century. Even so, some differences remain. This report offers both structural and thematic reflections arising from comparison of the printed baptismal orders. A chart with the full texts of all the current rites can be found in the appendix. It is important to note that the comparison of rites in the appendix focuses on the Roman Catholic rite of paedobaptism, not the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults. As noted earlier, the current Reformed rites may be used for either infants or persons of mature faith. This represents a reversal of practice from an earlier era, when Reformed churches had separate rites for adults and children, while Roman Catholic churches had a single rite to be used for both.

Similarities

All of the baptismal rites, both Reformed and Roman Catholic, according to written form if not always in practice, *follow* the reading and proclamation of the Word. Baptism is thus always understood as a response to the proclaimed Word. This is significant, because it represents a change from earlier practice, when baptisms were often conducted privately, apart from the liturgy of the Word (Roman Catholic) or before the reading and proclamation of the Word (some Reformed).

All the baptismal rites include the following elements, though not always in the same order:

- renunciations by candidates or parents of those to be baptized,
- profession of faith (usually the Apostles' Creed),
- promises by parents, sponsors/godparents (if present), and congregation,
- baptismal prayer at the font (variously titled "Blessing and Invocation of God over Baptismal Water" (RC), "Prayer of Thanksgiving" (CRCNA), "Prayer of Baptism" (UCC), "Baptismal Prayer of Thanksgiving" (RCA), and "Thanksgiving over the Water" (PCUSA)),
- baptism with water "in(to) the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."^{xxx} The UCC provides the option of alternate words "*You are baptized in the*

name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” This appears to be the central text of the baptismal rite in every case.

- post-baptismal anointing, laying on of hands and/or declaration and blessing without laying on of hands,
- prayers for the baptized.

From this it appears that all the rites have a basic common structure, though it has been appropriated in different ways.

Furthermore, there is remarkable agreement in the thematic content of the Reformed and Roman Catholic rites. In our analysis of the rites, texts were read for five kinds of statements: (1) *images*, such as those which variously describe baptismal water; (2) *commitments*, such as an expression for the desire for baptism; (3) *effects*, such as the gifts from the Holy Spirit received through baptism; (4) *formulae*, such as the interrogatories prior to baptism, or the adaptation of a berekah-style prayer form and (5) *biblical doctrine*, such as the notion of original sin. Some categories overlap in their functions within the rites, such as formulae used to elicit a commitment, or images which carry doctrinal meaning.

Such thematic analysis reveals substantial similarity among the rites.

* The majority of the images employed, and the authority for their use, appear to be derived from the gospels and the Old Testament, while the effects are almost all Pauline in their theological roots.

* Much of the language which accompanies ritual acts – such as the epiclesis, the blessings, the formulae and the commitments – seem to derive from Patristic sources, both in vocabulary and rhetorical structure.

* Certain texts, such as the use of a berekah-style prayer of blessing over the water, represent a retrieval of Jewish influence in the reform of Christian liturgies, ongoing since the early 1960s.

* The language of Pauline participationism describes the soteriological aspects of the sacramental action in the rites; Pauline ecclesiology of the body in large measure shapes the notion of church within the rites; Pauline virtue-vice language, as taken from the Wisdom literature and first century Judaism, seems to inform much of the effects and commitments, while reflecting the style of modern day personalism.

* There is a remarkable similarity in the kind of syntax, vocabulary and general expression used in the rites, characterized by biblical redolence, simplicity, directness, spareness of style and succinctness. This is all the more noteworthy when one considers that the RC rites are themselves a translation of a Latin original. This would suggest some degree of interaction and even dependency between the reformers of the rites.

Differences

The Roman Catholic rite includes baptismal elements early in the liturgy (reception of children, intercessions, pre-baptismal anointing), while the Reformed baptismal rites are contained in a particular portion of the overall liturgy. While references to baptism may be included at other points in the Reformed services, such as the prayers of intercession, this is not explicit in the written rites.

The Roman Catholic rite also contains several “explanatory rites” not present in any of the Reformed rites: white garment, lighted candle, and ephphetha.

The Reformed rites all begin with scripture or scriptural statements on the meaning of baptism. This is significant, because it points to the Reformed concern to provide biblical “warrant” for the sacrament.

Within the Reformed family, the CRC exhibits a different structure leading up to baptism: statement on baptism is followed by the prayer of thanksgiving, then the renunciations and profession of faith. All other Reformed rites include the renunciations and profession of faith before the prayer of thanksgiving.

The Reformed rites in various ways exhibit tension around the practice of post-baptismal anointing or laying on of hands. The CRCNA and UCC suggest that laying on of hands is optional; CRCNA, RCA, and PCUSA include signing with the cross as optional; the PCUSA suggests anointing as optional. All of this underscores a Reformed concern that the sign of water and the Word not be overshadowed by additional ritual gestures.

Finally, although almost all the rites have alternate expressions for all of the images, effects, commitments, formulae and doctrine of the other churches, there are a few exceptions, such as “original sin” and “covenant.” These exceptions may prove to be distinctive points of identity for individual communities and their liturgical expressions.

4. h. Conclusion: Similar rites with different hermeneutics

The numerous common elements in the baptismal rites of the Reformed and Roman Catholic churches surveyed in this study might initially suggest that there has been a significant sharing of doctrine, method and practice between both communities. In some instances, identical wordings and rites are evident in their baptismal liturgies, as found, for example, in the *berakah*-style blessing over the baptismal water, or in the use of the traditional biblical formula that accompanies the baptismal washing. No fewer than five such components can be found shaping the baptismal rites and texts now in use for each of these churches [see Appendix 1 and 2]. Indeed, many of the methods used in the reform of these rites appear to be products of a common liturgical renewal movement. Authors such as James F. White, who has published seminal studies on the reform of protestant liturgies over the last 40 years, has established this very point (see James White, “Roman Catholic and Protestant Worship in Relationship” in *Christian Worship in North America* [Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1997] 3-15). In addition, both Roman Catholic and Protestant churches undertook joint studies of the biblical and patristic elements of their liturgies in the decades immediately following the Second Vatican Council in repeated efforts to achieve visible communion where possible in their sacramental practices, especially in the celebration of baptism. [See, for example, *Made, Not Born: New Perspectives on Christian Initiation and the Catechumenate*, The Murphy Center for Liturgical Research (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1976).]

Ecumenical journals such as *Studia Liturgica* have effectively served as common platforms from which liturgical dialogue between churches is promoted. Organizations such as the International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) and the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), worked hand-in-hand with the Roman Catholic ICEL (International Commission on English in the Liturgy) to produce texts of great value in drawing the liturgies of Protestant and Catholic communities together.

Among the most prestigious of these groups is “Societas Liturgica”, founded by Wiebe Vos, a pastor of the Dutch Reformed Church, who saw the need for both Roman Catholic and

Reformed churches to draw closer together through a deepened appreciation of common biblical and patristic roots in the liturgy.

These few reflections would suggest that even though a shared liturgical theology may characterize the renewals of both the Reformed and Roman Catholic liturgies of the latter half of the 20th century, it is not clear that systematic or dogmatic theologians understand the sacramental reforms of their respective churches in the same way. Perhaps the most significant critique of the difference in the understanding of baptism between systematic theologians and liturgical theologians in the Reformed churches can be found John W. Riggs' *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002). There, Riggs maintains that the reform of baptismal rites completed in the Reformed churches since the 1972 appearance of the Roman Catholic *Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults* (RCIA), is notably out of harmony with established Reformed theologies of baptism.

Five of the most common theological and structural elements which seem to characterize the reformed baptismal rites of both churches as given above– (1) baptism as a response to the Word of God; (2) the use of the gospels as a source for baptismal images and (3) the use of Pauline literature as a source for the language of baptismal action and effects; (4) the recovery of patristic ritual elements and (5) the adoption of common biblical texts in the rites themselves – must then be read in at least two ways by Reformed theologians through the lens of either liturgical or systematic theology. While these differing interpretations of the Reformed baptismal rites may pose challenges internally to Reformed communities, the use of water through immersion, infusion or sprinkling, while pronouncing the biblical formula of baptism as reflected in Mt. 28.19, remain in place as essentials in the recently revised rites of both the Reformed and Roman Catholic communities.

It is a mark of unity that both churches have agreed that, in order to deepen their relationship as believers in Christ, any examination of their baptismal doctrines and practices must begin with an acknowledgement of commonly used biblical and patristic sources. In addition, both sides seem to have developed a common method for the retrieval of texts and rites essential to their discussions through the best of form and redaction criticisms, yielding accurate texts and ritual histories.

However, both communities appear to interpret these same sources with hermeneutics conditioned by confessional and dogmatic assumptions held *a priori*. This is most especially true in the reading of central texts from the corpus of Augustine's works on baptism, faith, justification, sacrament and original sin (see *De baptismo*; *De doctrina christiana*; *De libero arbitrio*; *De peccatorum meritis et remissione peccatorum et de baptismo parvulorum*; *de predestinatione sanctorum*; *De correctione donatistarum*; *Ad Simplicianum* (1.2) and *Confessiones* (7); *Enchiridion*; *Contra Donatistas*; *Expositio quaraundam propositionum ex epistula apostoli ad Romanos*; *De spiritu et littera*; *Sermones 151-156* and *De gratia Christi et de peccato originale*). Indeed, the reconciliation of approaches to the reading of Augustine may open a path for exchange and understanding between both churches in a way never before achieved.

The result of these distinctive approaches is predictable: widely varying readings of common sources lead to differing uses of these same rites and texts brought forward into recently revised baptismal liturgies. Essentially, the Roman Catholic and Reformed churches agree on which texts and rites are central to baptismal belief and practice, but reserve much of their interpretive use of these sources within the bounds of their separate communal confessions.

5. Theology of Baptism

Alongside the developments in baptismal rites during and since the sixteenth century, it is also important to consider both Roman Catholic and Reformed theologies of baptism. As with the baptismal rites, so too in baptismal theology, both traditions share much in common even as they also differ on key issues. The study of the theology of baptism in this chapter is designed to highlight both the common elements and the differences.

This chapter is organized into several sections: after some introductory questions on baptism, it turns to an examination of the nature of baptism and then looks at connections between baptism and the church, baptism and those who receive it, and baptism and other significant Christian doctrines. Within each section, some basic questions about baptism serve to focus the discussion on specific issues. We hope that this organizational structure will allow readers to focus on the main questions first and then to examine subsidiary questions that interest them.

Each topic in this chapter is introduced by a question. In response to each question, there is a common statement that expresses what this dialogue has agreed that we can say together as well as statements articulating both the Roman Catholic and Reformed positions. The statements from each side were developed first and became the basis for the common statements. In the common statements, we try to state as much as we hold in common even when the language that we typically use on both sides is not held in common.

In the dialogue, deciding what to use as source material for the Roman Catholic and Reformed positions proved to be challenging. Should we use only documents that have been officially approved or also statements by leading theologians from each side? If the latter, which theologians should we take to be authoritative? Not only because it would be difficult to decide which theologians to use, but also because theologians' statements have no official standing in any church in this dialogue, it seemed best to limit our sources to officially approved documents. For the Roman Catholic side, this meant using statements from church councils (primarily from the Council of Trent through the Second Vatican Council), papal teaching, and the recent Catechism of the Catholic Church. For the Reformed side, it meant using the confessions that the Reformed churches in this dialogue include in their official books of confessions or their denominational list of confessions. The matter of using confessions is complicated on the Reformed side not only because the Reformed churches in this dialogue stem from two branches of the Reformed tradition (Scottish and continental) and have different lists of confessions, but also because the Reformed churches adhere to their confessions in different ways. For some in this dialogue, the confessions carry the weight of tradition, although one might disagree with them today. For other members of the Reformed delegation, the confessions continue to state the faith of the church. Despite these complications, the representatives to the dialogue thought it best to use the official conciliar, catechetical, and confessional statements of our churches as the basis for stating the views of each side.

INTRODUCTION

5. a. What Is Baptism?

Common Statement

Baptism is a sacrament of the church in which a person is effused with or immersed in water, accompanied by the Trinitarian formula that the person is baptized “in(to) the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19-20). Baptism is the first of the sacraments that a person receives. It is a means of grace through which God works in a person and that marks the reception of a person into the life and mission of Christ’s Church.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism is the door to life and to the kingdom of God (*The Rite of Christian Initiation*, 1). Therefore, it is the first sacrament. It constitutes the beginning of Christian life and by being baptized one is incorporated into the Church. It is administered with water and in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Through it those born in sin are forgiven all sins, original and actual, and are regenerated into the new life of Christ. Baptism, the cleansing with water by the power of the living Word, makes us sharers in God’s own life and his adopted children (*The Rite of Christian Initiation*, 8).

Reformed Statement

Baptism is a sacrament ordained by Jesus Christ. Christ commanded his followers “to preach the Gospel and to baptize ‘in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit’ (Matt. 28:19)” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.185). This sign of initiation, in which God’s elect people are consecrated to God, involves washing or sprinkling with “visible water” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.185, 5.188). In baptism, a person is admitted into the visible church and given “a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of this giving up unto God, through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.154). Those who are baptized have been received into God’s church, set apart from other people and religions in order to be dedicated to God, and promised that God will be their God forever (Belgic Confession, art. 34).

5.b. Why Does the Church Baptize?

Common Statement

The Church baptizes in obedience to the command of Christ (Matt. 28:19, Mk. 16:16) in order to initiate persons into the life of the Church.

Roman Catholic Statement

“Holy Baptism is the basis of the whole Christian life, the gateway to life in the Spirit (*vitae spiritualis ianua*), and the door which gives access to the other sacraments” (CCC, 1213). With these words the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (CCC) introduces the sacrament of baptism. The Church baptizes in obedience to the command of Christ (Matt 28:19, Mk 16:16) in order to initiate persons into the life of the Church, the new life that God offers in Jesus Christ for the salvation of the world. In the fourth Gospel Jesus declares: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (Jn 10:10). Likewise the early Church, when it proclaimed the gospel of Christ, understood its mission in similar terms:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon and touched with our hands concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we saw it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us...(1 Jn 1:1-2).

Baptism imparts the new life in Christ. As the sacrament of regeneration baptism not only signifies new birth in Christ but “actually brings about the birth of water and the Spirit without which no one ‘can enter the kingdom of God’” (CCC, 1215). Therefore, the necessity of baptism is seen in its effects, namely, freedom from sin and rebirth as a son or daughter of God (that is, our adoption by grace). This new filial relation with God brought about by the adoption of grace also constitutes the baptized as members of Christ who are incorporated into the Church and are made sharers in her mission. Baptism, therefore, is the privileged means of grace through which a person becomes a Christian. (cf. Mark 10:15; John 3:5)

Reformed Statement

Reformed churches baptize because Jesus Christ ordained or instituted baptism (Westminster Conf., ch. 30.1; Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.&A. 165; Evangelical Catechism, Q.&A. 115-17). According to the Gospel of Matthew, after his resurrection Jesus sent his disciples into the world to “make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20, NRSV). Christians have, in response to this commission, seen baptism as a mark of commitment to the Lord and membership in the church: “The universal practice of baptism by the apostolic Church from its earliest days is attested in letters of the New Testament, the Acts of the Apostles, and the writings of the Fathers” (BEM, Baptism I.1). Since Christian baptism is grounded in Christ’s instruction in his Word, Reformed Christians attempt to follow both biblical practices and teachings surrounding baptism.

THE NATURE OF BAPTISM

5. c. What Does Baptism Effect or Signify?

Common Statement

Baptism is the divinely-appointed means of grace by which Christ acts through a visible sacramental act of the Church to signify the forgiveness of sins, regeneration, and being united to and engrafted into the Church, the Body of Christ.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism, the first of the sacraments, is the font or source of both Christian and ecclesial life. The meaning of baptism communicates what is distinctive in Catholic theology but also serves as the basis for a common ecumenical witness with other churches and ecclesial communities. Along with the World Council of Churches 1982 Faith and Order document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM)* the Catholic Church can affirm that the meaning of water baptism has to do with participation in Christ's death and resurrection (what Catholics call the paschal mystery), with conversion, pardoning and cleansing, with the reception of the gift of the Spirit, with incorporation into the Body of Christ, and with the Kingdom of God (*BEM* 3-7). In a more recent document of the Joint Working Group between the Roman Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches (JWG), "*Ecclesiological and Ecumenical Implications of a Common Baptism,*" baptism is identified with initiation into the life of faith, incorporation into the Church, and with continual growth in Christ including the call to holiness (§'s 34, 59, 71, 77). It is in light of these ecumenical insights that the particularities of a Catholic theology of baptism must be understood.

In many ways the different aspects of Christian Initiation continue to guide the ongoing pilgrimage of Christian maturation. As with the other sacraments, baptism is a means of grace. As each sacrament imparts its own specific sacramental grace, so too with baptism. Its two principal effects are "[p]urification from sins and new birth in the Holy Spirit" (*CCC*, 1262). Yet the sacrament embraces all the elements of becoming a Christian.

"The fruit of Baptism, or baptismal grace, is a rich reality that includes forgiveness of original sin and all personal sins, birth into the new life by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit. By this very fact the person baptized is incorporated into the Church, the Body of Christ, and made a sharer in the priesthood of Christ" (*CCC*, 1279).

The Catholic Church has traditionally affirmed the necessity of baptism for salvation, specifically "for those to whom the Gospel has been proclaimed and who have the possibility of asking for this sacrament" (*CCC*, 1257). One may receive salvation through a "baptism of blood" by suffering death for the faith before one is baptized. In a broader sense God is not bound by the sacraments. Since "the Holy Spirit offers to all the possibility of being made partakers, in a way known to God, of the paschal mystery" (*Gaudium et Spes* 62), non-Christians can be saved. This may also be understood as a "baptism of desire," something that catechumens intentionally express before their actual baptism. In the case of non-Christians the assumption is that baptism would be desired had the person known of its necessity. Of course, the question of how salvation is offered to non-Christians is beyond the scope of this paper, although it is

something that the Catholic Church considers a possibility without committing itself to an affirmation that other religions give access through their own rites to Christian salvation. Salvation is always mediated through Christ. How a non-Christian responds to divine grace is a matter of conscience and the light one has received. How that might entail the practice of another religious tradition is left to theological inquiry as long as the centrality of Christ and the paschal mystery is not displaced.

“Baptism is [also] the sacrament of faith” (CCC, 1253). This encompasses both the faith of the Church and that of each believer. The Catholic emphasis on cooperation with grace and the importance of good works does not negate the continual necessity of faith. Faith itself is “*a gift of God, a supernatural virtue infused by him*” (CCC, 153), something that clearly bespeaks the priority of grace.

“Before this faith can be exercised, man must have the grace of God to move and assist him; he must have the interior helps of the Holy Spirit, who moves the heart and converts it to God, who opens the eyes of the mind and ‘makes it easy for all to accept and believe the truth’” (*Dei Verbum*, 5).

At the same time assistance by divine grace does not exclude that faith is “an authentically human act...[and that t]rusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason” (CCC, 154). As a theological virtue, it relates Christians directly to God who have the Trinity as “their origin, motive, and object” (CCC, 1812). One must persevere in faith. Apart from works faith is dead (*Jas* 2:26) and when deprived of hope and love (the other two theological virtues) it “does not unite the believer to Christ and does not make him a living member of his Body” (CCC, 1815).

The theology of baptism is a window into the entire Christian life. Its elaboration can unfold the manifold riches of Christ for those who through baptism are united with him in his death and resurrection. This journey into the Christian life is also the way of discipleship. The paschal mystery is manifested in the lives of those who knowing the power of Christ’s resurrection are made conformable to his death by sharing in his sufferings (Phil 3: 10).

Reformed Statement

As a sacrament, baptism offers a visible word that speaks to God’s people. It speaks by means of actions, accompanied by words, that describe spiritual realities and assure God’s people. Baptism signifies certain spiritual realities. It is a “sign and seal” of the covenant of grace, of being ingrafted into Christ, “of regeneration, of remission of sins,” and of beginning “to walk in newness of life” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.154). Baptism is “the sign of new life through Jesus Christ,” uniting “the one baptized with Christ and with his people” (BEM, Baptism II.2). As “the sign and seal of God’s grace and covenant in Christ,” baptism “points us back to the grace of God expressed in Jesus Christ;” and the water of baptism “links us to the goodness of God’s creation and to the grace of God’s covenants with Noah and Israel” (PCUSA *Directory for Worship*, W-2.3002-03). Baptism is a sacrament that claims people as “children of

God, disciples of Christ, and members of Christ's church" (UCC Toward the 21st Century: A Statement of Commitment).

Baptism gives a person a new identity. "In Baptism a person is sealed by the Holy Spirit, given identity as a member of the church, welcomed to the Lord's Table, and set apart for a life of Christian service" (PCUSA Directory for Worship, W-4.2001). Baptism is therefore not only a sign of spiritual realities and a means by which God dispenses grace; it is also the sign of admission into the visible church: "In Holy Baptism God imparts the gift of the new life unto man, receives him into his fellowship as his child, and admits him as a member of the Christian Church" (Evangelical Catechism (UCC), Q. & A. 118).

In baptism God "signifies to us that just as water washes away the dirt of the body when it is poured on us ... so too the blood of Christ does the same thing internally, in the soul, by the Holy Spirit. It washes and cleanses it from its sins and transforms us from being the children of wrath into the children of God" (Belgic Conf., art. 34). Baptism's use of an external washing to signify an internal one serves to reinforce the promise of God to forgive sins. In baptism Christ "gave the promise that, as surely as water washes away the dirt from the body, so certainly his blood and his Spirit wash away my soul's impurity, in other words, all my sins" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 69). Baptism assures us that God "freely cleanses us from our sins by the blood of his Son, and in him adopts us to be his sons, and by a holy covenant joins us to himself, and enriches us with various gifts, that we might live a new life" (Second Helvetic Confession, 5. 187).

Baptism signifies our being "engrafted into Christ Jesus, to be made partakers of his righteousness, by which our sins are covered and remitted" (Scots Confession, 3.21). Although many Reformed Christians have hesitated to say that baptism effects forgiveness of sins or regeneration, others come close to such a view. Thus, the Westminster Confession of Faith says that, although the "efficacy of baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost;" but it adds that this grace is conferred "to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth to, according to the counsel of God's own will, in his appointed time" (Westminster Confession, 6.159).

Baptism also signifies a dying and rising with Christ: "Baptism with water represents not only cleansing from sin, but a dying with Christ and a joyful rising with him to new life" (Confession of 1967, 9.511). "By baptism, Christians are immersed in the liberating death of Christ where their sins are buried, where the 'old Adam' is crucified with Christ, and where the power of sin is broken," and they are "raised here and now to a new life in the power of the resurrection of Christ, confident that they will also ultimately be one with him in a resurrection like his" (BEM, Baptism II.3).

In sum, baptism uses water to signify cleansing from sin and regeneration. Reformed confessions speak of baptism as "the washing of rebirth and the washing away of sins," noting that, in baptism, God "wants to assure us, by this divine pledge and sign, that the washing away of our sins spiritually is as real as physical washing with water" (Heidelberg Catechism Q.&A.

71, 73). “For in baptism the sign is the element of water, and that visible washing which is done by the minister; but the thing signified is regeneration and the cleansing from sins” (Second Helvetic Confession, 5. 178-79).

Although baptism is a means of grace that signifies justification and cleansing from sin, it is not required in order for a person to be justified before God. Justification is an act by which God remits someone’s sins, absolves the person from guilt and punishment, receives the person into favor, and pronounces the person just (Rom. 8:33; Second Helvetic Confession, 5.106). In justification, God “forgives us our sins for Jesus’ sake, counts the merit of Christ as belonging to us, and accepts us as his children” (UCC Evangelical Catechism, Q. & A. 81). Justification occurs “‘freely’ or ‘by grace,’” apart from works and on the basis of Jesus Christ’s work of redemption (Belgic Confession, art. 23). In justification, God pardons sins and accepts people as righteous, “not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ’s sake alone; not by imputing faith itself, the act of believing, or any other evangelical obedience to them, as their righteousness; but by imputing the obedience and satisfaction of Christ unto them, they receiving and resting on him and his righteousness by faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God” (Westminster Confession of Faith, 6.068-69). Since justification is not based on our merits, but only on the “obedience of Christ crucified, which is ours when we believe in him,” it “is enough to cover our sins and to make us confident, freeing the conscience from the fear, dread, and terror of God’s approach” (Belgic Confession, art. 23).

Similarly, although baptism both signifies regeneration and serves as a means of grace moving God’s people to rebirth, baptism is not required in order for a person to be regenerated in Jesus Christ. Regeneration is the rebirth of water and the Spirit, a rebirth that enables entrance into the kingdom of God (John 3:3-6). This rebirth is a “new creation” and a “making alive” that, like the work of creation or the raising of the dead, “God works in us without our help” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 12). In regeneration, God’s grace “does not act in people as if they were blocks and stones; nor does it abolish the will and its properties or coerce a reluctant will by force, but spiritually revives, heals, reforms, and — in a manner at once pleasing and powerful — bends it back” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 16). Although regeneration is God’s supernatural work, God has chosen to bring about that work by such means as “the holy admonitions of the gospel, under the administration of the Word, the sacraments, and discipline” (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 17).

5. d. How Is Christian Baptism Related to the Biblical Economy of Salvation?

Common Statement

Christian baptism is rooted in the biblical economy of salvation. The water of baptism echoes the water of creation, of the Flood, of the Red Sea during the Exodus, and of Jesus’ own baptism. Baptism is the sign of God’s covenant with the church, a covenant that not only stretches back to God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants but also binds those who are members of this covenant to God as God’s children.

Roman Catholic Statement

Both the theology and liturgical praxis of baptism situate it within the biblical economy of salvation. The consecratory prayer over the water refers to the waters of creation, the Red Sea at the time of the Exodus, and those of the Jordan wherein Jesus was baptized. It culminates with the water and blood that flows from Christ's side as he hung upon the cross. This rich imagery associates the paschal sacrifice of Christ with God's creative and redemptive action throughout history. So too, by the power of the Spirit the waters of baptism are unsealed as a fountain of new life. It is also consistent with the covenantal language utilized in sacred scripture to express God's fidelity to creation and his people. Although the word covenant is not used explicitly in the Rite of Baptism it is implied and can be understood in light of Catholic teaching.

Covenant is a part of the "divine plan of Revelation...realized simultaneously 'by deeds and words which are intrinsically bound up with each other' and shed light on each other" (CCC, 53). "Again and again you offered a covenant to man, and through the prophets taught him to hope for salvation" the Church prays in Eucharistic Prayer IV of the *Roman Missal*. "God made an everlasting covenant with Noah and with all living beings (cf. *Gen* 9:16). It will remain in force as long as the world lasts" (CCC, 71)...

"God chose Abraham and made a covenant with him and his descendants. By the covenant God formed his people and revealed his law to them through Moses. Through the prophets, he prepared them to accept the salvation destined for all humanity" (CCC, 72)..." God has revealed himself fully by sending his own Son, in whom he has established his covenant forever. The Son is his Father's definitive Word; so there will be no further Revelation after him" (CCC, 73). This new and definitive covenant in Jesus Christ is at the heart of the Gospel, the Church and its sacramental life, especially the Eucharist, and is the basis for Christian prayer—"Christian prayer is a covenant relationship between God and man in Christ. It is the action of God and of man, springing forth from both the Holy Spirit and ourselves, wholly directed to the Father, in union with the human will of the Son of God made man" (CCC, 2564).

Reformed Statement

Christian baptism is deeply rooted in God's dealings with ancient Israel. The washing and transformation that occur in baptism happen not "by the physical water but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God, who is our Red Sea, through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, who is the devil, and to enter the spiritual land of Canaan (Belgic Confession, art. 34).

Baptism is a sign of God's covenant. The covenant is the means by which God's people are bound to God; and baptism is a sign and seal of the covenant of grace (Westminster Conf., 6.154). "In baptism, the church celebrates the renewal of the covenant with which God has bound his people to himself" (Confession of 1967, 9.511). Thus those who are baptized in the name of Christ have been "enrolled, entered, and received into the covenant and family, and so into the inheritance of the sons of God" (Second Helvetic Confession, 5.187).

Some Reformed Christians speak of both a covenant of works and a covenant of grace; others speak only of a covenant of grace. The covenant of works is understood by those who affirm it to be a covenant made by God with the first humans, “wherein life was promised to Adam, and in him to his posterity, upon condition of perfect and personal obedience” (Westminster Conf., 6.038). The fall into sin left humans incapable of perfect obedience and therefore unable to attain life with God. The covenant of works, if one existed, was ineffective.

Given humanity’s plight, God made a covenant of grace, “wherein he freely offered unto sinners life and salvation by Jesus Christ, requiring of them faith in him, that they may be saved, and promising to give unto all those that are ordained unto life, his Holy Spirit, to make them willing and able to believe” (Westminster Conf., 6.039). The covenant of grace can also be called a testament, with Jesus Christ as the testator bequeathing “the everlasting inheritance, with all things belonging to it” (Westminster Conf., 6.040).

Although this covenant or testament was administered differently before and after the appearance of the promised Messiah, there is one covenant of grace, not two. Thus, since the appearance of Christ, “the ordinances in which this covenant is dispensed are the preaching of the Word, and the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper” (Westminster Conf., 6.041-42). Thus baptism was ordained by Jesus Christ “not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace” (Westminster Conf. 6.154). Baptism signifies and seals “our ingrafting into Christ, and partaking of the covenant of grace, and our engagement to be the Lord’s” (Westminster Shorter Catechism, 7.094).

By the use of water, baptism symbolizes God’s ancient covenant of grace: “The water of Baptism symbolizes the waters of Creation, of the Flood, and of the Exodus from Egypt. Thus, the water of Baptism links us to the goodness of God’s creation and to the grace of God’s covenants with Noah and Israel” (PCUSA Directory for Worship, W-2.3003).

Baptism echoes circumcision, the sign of the covenant for ancient Israel: “As circumcision was the sign and symbol of inclusion in God’s grace and covenant with Israel, so Baptism is the sign and symbol of inclusion in God’s grace and covenant with the Church” (PCUSA Directory for Worship, W-2.3004).

5. e. What is the relationship between baptism, faith, and discipleship?

Common Statement

Baptism is an important source for a life of Christian faith and discipleship. For those baptized as infants, faith and discipleship are the expected fruit of baptism. For those baptized as adolescents or adults, typically faith and discipleship precede baptism. Nevertheless, both infant and adult baptism are intended to nurture Christian faith and discipleship. Working with the

Word of God, the sacraments – including baptism – nourish the faith of God’s people and motivate them to follow God’s will as Christ’s disciples.

Roman Catholic Statement

The “whole organism of the Christian’s supernatural life has its roots in baptism” (CCC, 1266). This embraces a life of discipleship through growth in the theological and moral virtues, and the prompting and power of the Holy Spirit in graces and gifts. All of this is based upon the efficacy and fruitfulness of sacramental grace. Sacramental efficacy insures the conferral of grace in the sacramental act.

The “sacraments act *ex opere operato* (literally: ‘by the very fact of the action's being performed’), i.e., by virtue of the saving work of Christ, accomplished once for all. It follows that ‘the sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God.’ From the moment that a sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it, independently of the personal holiness of the minister. Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them” (CCC, 1128).

In sacraments the posture of the recipient may be interpreted as informing the disposition of the one receiving the sacraments so as to not place any obstacle in the way of reception, e.g., impenitence. More positively one is exhorted to receive the sacraments in faith, hope and love, and cooperate with the grace received in order to bear fruit in Christ.

Discipleship follows upon baptism. For adults who are baptized using the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults (RCIA) culminating at the Easter Vigil, baptism is followed by a period of mystagogy wherein the mysteries of the faith continue to be assimilated through the grace of baptism and one’s relationship with Christ. For all the faithful this is represented and celebrated in the fifty days of the Easter Season ending with the Solemn Feast of Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit. As a life long process of discipleship baptism continues to highlight the Christian’s deepening union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

The faithful Christian who has “kept the seal” until the end, remaining faithful to the demands of his baptism, will be able to depart this life “marked with the sign of faith,” with his baptismal faith, in expectation of the blessed vision of God—the consummation of faith—in the hope of resurrection (CCC, 1274).

Reformed Statement

Baptism nourishes Christian faith and discipleship. A life of faith and discipleship involves trusting God and accepting grace: “Faith is complete trust in God and willing acceptance of his grace in Jesus Christ” (Evangelical Catechism (UCC), Q. & A. 80). The main components of genuine Christian faith are knowledge and assurance. Faith involves a form of knowledge: “Christian faith is not an opinion or human conviction, but a most firm trust and a

clear and steadfast assent of the mind, and then a most certain apprehension of the truth of God presented in the Scriptures and in the Apostles' Creed, and thus also of God himself, the greatest good, and especially of God's promise and of Christ who is the fulfillment of all promises" (Second Helvetic Confession, 5.112). In addition to this firm knowledge, faith also involves a deep assurance of the heart: "True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 21).

Faith does not arise from our own "natural powers," but is kindled in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (Scots Confession, 3.12; Belgic Confession, art. 22). The Spirit ordinarily creates faith in people's hearts through the preaching of the gospel (or ministry of the word), then confirms and strengthens that faith through preaching as well as through the sacraments and prayer (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 65; Westminster Conf. of Faith, 6.078). Since faith is bestowed on people by God, not in the sense that God gives the potential to believe and awaits our choice, but in the sense that God produces in people "both the will to believe and the belief itself," faith is a gift of God (Canons of Dort, II, art. 14)

How does baptism nourish faith? Word and sacraments work together, like a letter with an imprinted seal, to ground faith: "Now faith rests only upon the Word of God; and the Word of God is like papers or letters, and the sacraments are like seals which only God appends to the letters" (Second Helvetic Confession, 5.172). Since God has ordained sacraments "to nourish and sustain our faith," and since the Lord's Supper testifies to us that, "just as truly as" we hold, eat, and drink the visible bread and wine of the sacrament, so truly do we receive Jesus Christ's body and blood, faith can be seen as "the hand and mouth of our souls" (Belgic Confession, arts. 33, 35).

Baptism is a call to Christian discipleship: "The Baptism which makes Christians partakers of the mystery of Christ's death and resurrection implies confession of sin and conversion of heart" (BEM, Baptism II.4). Luther says that baptism with water "signifies that the old Adam in us, together with all sins and evil lusts, should be drowned by daily sorrow and repentance and be put to death, and that the new man should come forth daily and rise up, cleansed and righteous, to live forever in God's presence" (Luther's Small Catechism). The Heidelberg Catechism speaks of baptism as being washed with Christ's blood and Spirit, noting that being washed with Christ's blood signifies God's forgiveness of sins and that being washed with Christ's Spirit "means that the Holy Spirit has renewed me and set me apart to be a member of Christ so that more and more I become dead to sin and increasingly live a holy and blameless life" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 70). In baptism, Jesus Christ, through the Spirit, washes away sins and frees people from their control. Baptism therefore signifies that one day we will rise with Christ in glory and may walk even now in newness of life (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q. & A. 72).

Baptism nourishes the life of faith and discipleship not only of the person being baptized but also of those who witness this demonstrated word of grace. Throughout their lives, and

especially when tempted or when witnessing the baptism of others, those who have been baptized must “improve their baptism” by considering baptism’s meaning and benefits, being humbled by their having fallen short of and gone contrary to the grace of baptism, receiving assurance of pardon, drawing strength from Christ’s death and resurrection for their own mortifying of sin, and endeavoring to live as those who have been given to Christ and baptized by the Spirit (Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.&A. 167).

BAPTISM AND THE CHURCH

5. f. What implications does baptism have for the church?

Common Statement

Baptism is the sacramental bond that effects membership in the visible Church. As an ecclesial sacrament it is also the basis for the real communion that Christians enjoy in their churches and among the various ecclesial communities as they strive to overcome separation and division in a more full and perfect communion.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism is ecclesially mediated and is the basis for incorporation into the Church. The People of God of the New Covenant are brought into being from the font of baptism. It creates a communion that “transcends all the natural or human limits of nations, cultures, races, and sexes” (CCC, 1267). All the baptized share in common priesthood of all believers, itself a participation in the priesthood of Christ including his prophetic and royal missions. From this proceeds “the apostolic and missionary activity of the People of God” (CCC, 1270). As the sacramental bond of communion baptism “constitutes the foundation of communion among all Christians, including those who are not yet in full communion with the Catholic Church” (CCC, 1271). Thus baptism serves as the basis for ecumenism as *Unitatis Redintegratio* (UR), Vatican II’s *Decree on Ecumenism* states:

For men who believe in Christ and have been properly baptized are put in some, though imperfect communion with the Catholic Church (UR, 3).

And in terms of full ecclesial intentionality of baptism,

Baptism, therefore, constitutes the sacramental bond of unity existing among all those who through it are reborn. But baptism, of itself, is only a beginning, a point of departure, for it is wholly directed toward the acquiring of fullness of life in Christ. Baptism is thus ordained toward a complete profession of faith, a complete incorporation into the system of salvation such as Christ himself willed it to be, and finally, toward a complete integration into Eucharistic communion (UR, 22).

Reformed Statement

Christian baptism is a “basic bond of unity” that brings Christians “into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place” (BEM, Baptism II.6). This “one baptism into Christ constitutes a call to the churches to overcome their divisions and visibly manifest their fellowship” (BEM, Baptism II.6).

Baptism is the means by which “individuals are publicly received into the church to share in its life and ministry;” conversely, when it baptizes people, “the church becomes responsible for their training and support in Christian discipleship” (The Confession of 1967 of the PCUSA, 9.51).

5. g. Who May Baptize, and with What Means and Formula?

Common Statement

In order for a baptism to be valid, it must be administered by someone authorized to do so, using water and the Trinitarian formula. Typically, baptism is administered by an ordained minister or priest, within a worship service, using water (either dipping the baptizand into the water or pouring or sprinkling the water on the baptizand), and following the command of Jesus to baptize people of all nations “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). The Roman Catholic Church allows non-ordained people to administer baptism and permits baptism to occur outside a worship service; Reformed churches do not allow such exceptions. Some Reformed churches allow – at least in practice – the use of alternate formulations of the Trinitarian formula (e.g., “in the name of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sanctifier”); other Reformed churches as well as the Roman Catholic Church do not. With one exception, the Roman Catholic Church and the Reformed churches in this dialogue accept any baptism of a member of one of the other ecclesiastical bodies in this dialogue as long as the baptism was recognized as valid by the ecclesiastical communion in which the person was a member. The exception is that the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize as valid a baptism in which any of the following is lacking: intent to do what the Church does when she baptizes, use of water, and use of the Triune name as given in Matt. 28:19.

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism must be administered with water and in the name of the Triune God since “entry into the life of the Most Holy Trinity through configuration to the Paschal mystery of Christ” is signified and enacted in the sacrament (*CCC*, 1239). Therefore, the validity of baptism has to do with the very mystery of the faith, the mystagogy of communion with the Trinity. Consequently, the most expressive form of baptism is triple immersion in baptismal water, the latter consecrated by a prayer of epiclesis (an invocation for the Father to send the Holy Spirit upon the water to give the grace of the Son). However, pouring is also accepted. The formula differs between the Latin Church and the Eastern Catholic Churches. The minister in the Latin Church

says: “N., I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” An Eastern Rite priest utilizes a variation of this: “The servant of God, N., is baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” As for the ministers of baptism a distinction is made between ordinary and extraordinary situations with the ecclesial intentionality of the sacrament preserved in both cases, either directly through the sacramental representation of Christ in the ordained minister who administers the sacrament, or indirectly through action that conforms to the Church’s understanding of it.

The ordinary ministers of Baptism are the bishop and priest and, in the Latin Church, also the deacon. In case of necessity, anyone, even a non-baptized person, with the required intention, can baptize, by using the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The intention required is to will to do what the Church does when she baptizes. The Church finds the reason for this possibility in the universal saving will of God and the necessity of Baptism for salvation. (CCC, 1256).

Reformed Statement

Sacraments must be administered by “lawful ministers” who have been “appointed to preach the Word, unto whom God has given the power to preach the gospel, and who are lawfully called by some Kirk” (Scots Conf., ch. 22; also Westminster Conf., ch 30.2). Since baptism is rooted in and declares Christ’s faithfulness, points to the faithfulness of God, and involves a congregational reaffirmation of faith and pledge “to provide an environment of witness and service,” baptism should “always be celebrated and developed in the setting of the Christian community” (BEM, Baptism IV.12). Therefore, within Reformed churches, only an ordained minister of the Word, functioning within the context of the church, may baptize.

Since the church has received the sacrament of baptism from God as a means of grace, the church baptizes by using Christ’s words of institution, baptizing people of all nations “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19; quoted by Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 71 and by the Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 75).

Following Christ’s example and instruction, Christians baptize with water, which may be poured or sprinkled on the person, or into which the person may be dipped (2nd Helvetic Conf., ch. 20; Westminster Conf., ch. 30.3). Because the sacraments should be celebrated in their “original simplicity,” the sacrament of baptism should not be “adulterated” by adding human devices such as “exorcism, the use of burning lights, oil, salt, spittle, and such other things” as baptizing twice per year “with a multitude of ceremonies” (2nd Helvetic Conf., ch. 20; Scots Conf., ch. 22).

Reformed Christians consider a sacrament to be valid if it includes the biblical words of institution and the biblical sign (i.e., water or bread and the fruit of the vine), if it is performed by someone who would be authorized by a Christian church to perform the sacrament, if the church’s authorities sanction the sacrament, if the recipient (or the parent[s], in cases of infant baptism) requests or intends to receive the sacrament, and if it is performed in a worship service (or, if that is not practicable, connected in some way to the worshipping community).

RECIPIENTS OF BAPTISM

5. h. Why Do People Need to Be Baptized?

Common Statement

Although God created the human race righteous and holy, bearing God's image, the fall of humanity into sin has so infected the race that all human beings are born sinful, alienated from God, and subject to death and misery. Sin has ruined our connection with God, other human beings, and other creatures, leaving us slaves to sin as well as guilty of it, and helpless to save ourselves from our plight. We therefore need the forgiveness and new life from God that are effected (according to the Roman Catholic Church) or signified (according to Reformed churches) by baptism.

Roman Catholic Statement

The necessity of baptism in bringing about regeneration and adoption figures greatly in the divine economy of salvation due to the consequences of original sin that subjected humanity to sin and death. Original sin is "an essential truth of the faith" (CCC, 388). It is, "so to speak, the 'reverse side' of the Good News that Jesus is the Savior of all men" (CCC, 389) and cannot be ignored without undermining the faith itself. The Catholic Church, therefore, understands the Fall of humanity as an historical event preceded by the fall of the angels. "The account of the fall in *Genesis* 3 uses figurative language, but affirms a primeval event, a deed that took place *at the beginning of the history of man*. Revelation gives us the certainty of faith that the whole of human history is marked by the original fault freely committed by our first parents" (CCC, 390).

Through their own personal sin Adam and Eve "lost the original holiness and justice...received from God, not only for ...[themselves]...but for all human beings" (CCC, 416). They universally transmitted to their descendents the wound of their own sin such that Pope Paul VI could confess in his 1968 *Solemn Profession Faith: Credo of the People of God* (CPG, quoted in CCC, 419), "We therefore hold, with the Council of Trent, that original sin is transmitted with human nature, 'by propagation, not by imitation' and that it is... 'proper to each' (CPG, 16). More precisely "original sin is called 'sin' only in an analogical sense: it is a sin 'contracted' and not 'committed' - a state and not an act" (CCC, 404). The loss of original justice and holiness leads to another consequence of original sin. "[H]uman nature is weakened in its powers, subject to ignorance, suffering and the domination of death, and inclined to sin (this inclination is called 'concupiscence')" (CCC, 418).

It is important to register that for Catholics concupiscence is not sin itself. Sin always requires a free act of the will. Concupiscence is the tendency toward sin present in human nature after the Fall. This inclination to sin – metaphorically speaking, 'the tinder for sin' (*fomes peccati*) – also remains after baptism. Despite the deprivation caused by original sin the Catholic Church rejoices that the "victory that Christ won over sin has given us greater blessings than

those which sin had taken from us” (CCC, 420). It also provides a spiritual lesson for the newly baptized so that with the help of Christ’s grace they “may prove themselves in the struggle of Christian life. This is the struggle of *conversion* directed toward holiness and eternal life to which the Lord never ceases to call us” (CCC, 1426).

In addition to washing away original sin baptism also remits the temporal punishment due to any personal sin. The consequences of sin or its deleterious effects upon a person are remitted. However, “certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering, illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character” (CCC, 1264) along with concupiscence.

An important aspect of the Catholic understanding of the human condition (or theological anthropology) is the prelapsarian state of humanity. Although created in grace – the state of original holiness and justice that enabled friendship and intimacy with God as well as harmony in the human condition, interiorly, socially, and with all of creation – it must be understood that the loss of this grace was one of the effects of the Fall. Therefore, “original holiness and justice” was indeed a grace and not something intrinsic to human nature. It was a gift from God. Nevertheless, humanity was constituted in this state. Without pursuing the many nuances and lively theological debates that inform the Catholic understanding of the relationship between nature and grace, it is worth stating that from a Catholic perspective the grace of original holiness and justice would be compromised – especially with regard to the gratuity, freedom and supernatural character of divine grace – if it was understood to be an essential dimension of human nature and not as a gift given with creation. Since baptism effects the new creation in Christ through regeneration and justification, grace restores the holiness and justice lost in the Fall. This is a marvelous work of divine mercy and grace. With St. Augustine the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* agrees that “the justification of the wicked is a greater work than the creation of heaven and earth” and even “surpasses the creation of the angels in justice, in that it bears witness to a greater mercy” (CCC, 1994). Or, as St. Paul expresses the superabundance of grace, “where sin increased, grace overflowed all the more” (Rom 5: 20b).

Reformed Statement

People need to be baptized because all are sinners, born subject to sin and willing participants in the human race’s sinful rejection of God. All are therefore alienated from God and subject to death and misery.

Although God created the human race “in true righteousness and holiness,” and bearing God’s image, the fall into sin “has so poisoned our nature that we are born sinners — corrupt from conception on” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 7). Original sin is an inherited corruption whereby, through the fall into sin, human beings have come “under the power of satan, sin, and death,” and therefore are “inclined to do evil” (Evangelical Catechism of the UCC, Q.&A. 24, 25). Original sin is an innate, transmitted corruption “which has been derived or propagated in us all from our first parents, by which we, immersed in perverse desires and averse to all good, are inclined to all evil” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.037). Original Sin is “so vile and enormous in

God's sight that it is enough to condemn the human race, and it is not abolished or wholly uprooted even by baptism" (Belgic Conf., art. 15).

Original sin contains several facets, including "the guilt of Adam's first sin, the want of that righteousness wherein he was created, and the corruption of his nature, whereby he is utterly indisposed, disabled, and made opposite unto all that is spiritually good, and wholly inclined to all evil, and that continually" (Westminster Larger Catechism, 7.135). In short, unless we are born again "we are so corrupt that we are totally unable to do any good and inclined toward all evil" (Heidelberg Catechism, Q.&A. 8). Having been born with original sin, and apart from the regenerating work of the Spirit, we both unable and unwilling to return to God or to begin to reform ourselves: "Therefore, all people are conceived in sin and are born children of wrath, unfit for any saving good, inclined to evil, dead in their sins, and slaves to sin; without the grace of the regenerating Holy Spirit they are neither willing nor able to return to God, to reform their distorted nature, or even to dispose themselves to such reform" (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 3).

Although original sin has turned us from God and leaves us incapable of reforming ourselves, it has not extinguished all sense of God or morality: "There is, to be sure, a certain light of nature remaining in man after the fall, by virtue of which he retains some notions about God, natural things, and the difference between what is moral and immoral, and demonstrates a certain eagerness for virtue and for good outward behavior. But this light of nature is far from enabling man to come to a saving knowledge of God and conversion to him" (Canons of Dort, III/IV, art. 4).

A recent study catechism nicely captures the ways in which sin has distorted both ourselves and all our relations with others: "Although we did not cease to be with God, our fellow human beings, and other creatures, we did cease to be for them; and although we did not lose our distinctive human capacities completely, we did lose the ability to use them rightly, especially in relation to God. Having ruined our connection with God by disobeying God's will, we are persons with hearts curved in upon ourselves. We have become slaves to the sin of which we are guilty, helpless to save ourselves, and are free, so far as freedom remains, only within the bounds of sin" (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 20).

5. i. Who Can Receive Baptism?

Common Statement

Anyone who, having been outside the household of faith, accepts the Christian faith and participates in catechetical instruction not only may, but should, be baptized. In addition, infants of believing parents should be baptized.

Roman Catholic Statement

Quoting from the Code of Canon Law of the Latin Church (*Codex Iuris Canonici*—*CIC*, can. 864) the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "Every person not yet baptized and

only such a person is able to be baptized” (CCC, 1246). The same applies for the Eastern Catholic Churches (*Corpus Canonum Ecclesiarum Orientalium*—CCEO, can. 679). There are two implications that one can draw from these canons. First, it highlights the missional dimension of the Church, called to proclaim the gospel to all nations. All peoples are called to faith and baptism. Second, any person validly baptized in another Church or ecclesial community is already a Christian and cannot be baptized again. It underscores the common faith that Catholics share with other Christians.

Reformed Statement

Churches baptize those who, having come from other religions or from unbelief, “accept the Christian faith and participate in catechetical instruction” (BEM, Baptism IV.11). So those who “profess faith in and obedience unto Christ” should be baptized (Westminster Conf., 6.157). But those who are not part of the visible church and therefore are “strangers from the covenant of promise,” should not be baptized “till they profess their faith in Christ, and obedience to him,” although infants with one or both parents who profess faith in, and obedience to, Christ “are, in that respect, within the covenant, and are to be baptized” (Westminster Larger Catechism, Q.&A. 166).

5. j. Why do we baptize children?

Common Statement

Since God’s promises and covenant extend to the children of those who believe in Jesus Christ, we administer baptism, the sign of the covenant, not only to those who come to faith as adults, but also to the infant children of those who believe in Jesus Christ and have established membership in a local parish or congregation. Such baptism recognizes the need of new birth on the part of all people, even infants. It also connects Christian baptism to circumcision, the sign of the covenant in ancient Israel. And it shows that infants, along with their believing parents, are included in the hope of the gospel and belong to the people of God.

Roman Catholic Statement

The Catholic Church baptizes infants in recognition that children are in need of new birth and that infant baptism particularly manifests the “sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation” (CCC, 1250). Since baptism is the sacrament of faith there is a clear recognition that faith is present for infant baptism as well as for adult baptism. Within the faith of the Church including the faith of the assembly, the faith of the parents and godparents (a true ecclesial function—*officium*) is active on behalf of the child. Christian nurture provided by family and community is important for the faith that must grow after baptism as the child goes on to receive the sacraments of Reconciliation, Eucharist, and Confirmation at the appropriate ages. First Communion in particular is an important event for the child to develop a personal relationship with Christ. In this respect baptism is a beginning but one which the Church cannot refuse.

The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth (CCC, 1250).

Reformed Statement

Just as infants in ancient Israel received circumcision, the sign of the covenant, so too infants in the church should be baptized: “We believe our children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as little children were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises made to our children” (Belgic Confession, art. 34). Since infants as well as adults are in God’s covenant, they should be “received into the Christian church” by this “mark of the covenant” and “distinguished from the children of unbelievers. This was done in the Old Testament by circumcision, which was replaced in the New Testament by baptism” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 74). In short, “baptism does for our children what circumcision did for the Jewish people. This is why Paul calls baptism the ‘circumcision of Christ’” (Belgic Conf., art. 34, quoting Col. 2:11).

In sum, infants, “[a]long with their believing parents, are included in the great hope of the gospel and belong to the people of God. Forgiveness and faith are both promised to them as gifts through Christ’s covenant with his people. These children are therefore to be received into the community by baptism, nurtured in the Word of God, and confirmed at an appropriate time by their own profession of faith” (Study Catechism of 1998 of the PCUSA, Q. & A. 73).

When parents have their children baptized, the parents must “help their children grow in godly life by Christian teaching and training, by prayer and example” (Evangelical Catechism, Q.&A. 121). The church and its minister need evidence of such a commitment before baptizing an infant: “It would be irresponsible to baptize an infant without at least one Christian parent or guardian who promises to nurture the infant in the life of the community and to instruct it in the Christian faith” (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 74).

5. k. Why should someone be baptized only once?

Common Statement

As Jesus Christ died once for all and was raised from the dead (Rom 6:10, Heb 9:28, 1 Pet 3:18), so too, the Christian is baptized only once, signifying union with Christ in his death and resurrection through the washing of regeneration and renewal in the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5-7).

Roman Catholic Statement

Baptism, along with Confirmation and Holy Orders, is a sacrament that cannot be repeated. This has been associated with the reception of a spiritual mark or sacramental character. In the case of the first sacrament to be administered, “[b]aptism imprints on the soul an indelible spiritual sign, the character, which consecrates the baptized person for Christian worship” (CCC, 1280). Therefore the baptized person by virtue of this “*seal of the Lord*” is

enabled to exercise the baptismal priesthood or the common priesthood of the faithful (*CCC*, 1274). It is also a sign of the fullness of redemption to be accomplished in the consummation of faith at the parousia, the resurrection of the dead, and in the beatific vision. A sign of hope that marks the person as belonging to Christ, it also cannot be erased even “if sin prevents Baptism from bearing the fruits of salvation” (*CCC*, 1272).

Reformed Statement

As the sign of rebirth in Christ, baptism should be administered only once to a person: “anyone who aspires to reach eternal life ought to be baptized only once without ever repeating it — for we cannot be born twice” (Belgic Confession, art. 34). “Any practice which might be interpreted as ‘re-baptism’ must be avoided” (BEM, Baptism IV.13).

5. 1. What is the relationship between baptism and confirmation and/or profession of faith?

Common Statement

Those who are baptized as adults are confirmed or profess their faith at the time of their baptism. Those baptized as children should, at an appropriate age, be confirmed or make an ecclesial profession of their faith. While we agree that baptism signifies new birth in water and the Holy Spirit and that no Christian is without the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:9), we do not agree that there is a distinct sacramental act to signify and impart the gift of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless, all the baptized are heirs of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit given at Pentecost.

Roman Catholic Statement

The overarching framework for baptism is the context of Christian Initiation. Along with the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist baptism is necessary for the full initiation of the new Christian into Christ and his Church. The new life in Christ is received in baptism, strengthened in confirmation and nurtured by the Eucharist. Although all three sacraments are administered together in the case of adult conversion and for infants in the Eastern Catholic Churches, they are separated for the initiation of those baptized as infants in the Latin Church. The sacraments of Eucharist and Confirmation are administered at an appropriate age along with the proper catechesis and sacramental preparation. Nevertheless, this distinction between baptism and confirmation does not eliminate their essential complementarity for Christian initiation.

As baptism is clearly associated with the paschal mystery of the Easter Vigil and the reception of the fruits of Christ’s saving death and resurrection, so “the effect of the sacrament of Confirmation is the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit as once granted to the apostles on the day of Pentecost” (*CCC*, 1302). During the Easter Vigil adult catechumens are baptized, confirmed and receive the Eucharist for the first time, thus completing their Christian Initiation. The Christian faithful also renew their baptismal promises by renouncing sin and Satan, and professing the Apostles’ Creed. The joint mission of the Son and Holy Spirit is present in both sacraments with the latter sacrament understood as the “an increase and deepening of baptismal

grace” (CCC, 1303). A deeper sense of divine filiation, union with Christ, and increase of the gifts of the Spirit in Confirmation render a more perfect bond with the Church and a special strength to confess Christ in the world. Therefore, the grace of Confirmation is a further giving of the Spirit already received in baptism with an eye towards maturity, perfection and mission.

Reformed Statement

Those who come to the Christian faith, not having been baptized as infants, make a profession of their faith and are confirmed at the same time that they are baptized. Those who have been baptized as infants, having been received into the community of the church and “nurtured in the Word of God,” are to be “confirmed at an appropriate time by their own profession of faith” (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q.&A. 73).

Although one should be baptized only once, that “baptism is profitable not only when the water is on us and when we receive it but throughout our entire lives” (Belgic Confession, art. 34). Thus, in the case of those baptized as infants, God’s promises to be a God to that child lead to the church’s expectation that God will work in that child through the Holy Spirit and that the child will respond to the Spirit’s work in faith. The church then expects that, once they reach an age of maturity, baptized children who have responded to the Spirit’s work in faith will profess that faith publicly in the context of the church.

Since confirmation was not instituted by Jesus, the Protestant reformers did not accept confirmation as a sacrament. Still, many reformers desired some ritual by which children who had been baptized would publicly appropriate the baptismal promises that were spoken on their behalf. Thus the Reformed tradition adapted the earlier rite of confirmation into a catechetical practice for children that included the laying on of hands. Upon completion of this rite, children were typically admitted to the Lord’s Supper, thus connecting two fragmented pieces of patristic initiation, “confirmation” and first communion. Within the Reformed tradition, infant baptism, young adult confirmation, and then first communion became a standard pattern for many churches. In recent years, several Reformed churches have begun allowing or advocating the pattern of infant baptism, communion at a young age, and then confirmation during adolescence.

BAPTISM AND OTHER DOCTRINES

5. m. What is the relationship between baptism and election?

Common Statement

Those who are baptized are part of God’s elect people, the Christian church. A person’s being baptized is not a guarantee that the person is predestined or elected to salvation.

Roman Catholic Statement

The Catechumenate for those preparing for Baptism ends with the Rite of Election at the beginning of Lent. The candidates are thus called the elect.

For a person to be enrolled among the elect, he must have enlightened faith and the deliberate intention of receiving the sacraments of the Church. After the election, he is encouraged to advance toward Christ with even greater generosity (*RCIA*, 134).

However, this differs from the theological discussion over the doctrine of election understood as predestination. The Catholic Church has not precisely defined the doctrines of election and predestination although the doctrine exists and has led to considerable theological debate. There are certain negative parameters to be observed. The Council of Trent states:

“No one, moreover, so long as he is in this mortal life, ought so far to presume as regards the secret mystery of divine predestination, as to determine for certain that he is assuredly in the number of the predestinate; as if it were true, that he that is justified, either cannot sin any more, or, if he do sin, that he ought to promise himself an assured repentance; for except by special revelation, it cannot be known whom God hath chosen unto Himself” (*Decree on Justification*, Chapter XII).

This is confirmed by the canons of the same *Decree*:

“If any one saith, that he will for certain, of an absolute and infallible certainty, have that great gift of perseverance unto the end, unless he have learned this by special revelation; let him be anathema” (Canon 16).

“If any one saith, that the grace of Justification is only attained to by those who are predestined unto life; but that all others who are called, are called indeed, but receive not grace, as being, by the divine power, predestined unto evil; let him be anathema” (Canon 17).

The *Decree on Justification* along with other Decrees, e.g., the Condemnation of Cornelius Jansen, thus excludes positive reprobation based upon the unconditional predestination of the unjust, and any denial of the universality of the divine will for salvation, the scope of the atonement, and extent of the offer of grace. Consistent with these the Catholic doctrine of grace denies its irresistibility and affirms the freedom of the will both prior to grace (although wounded by sin) and under the influence of grace. *Positive assessments of predestination include the following propositions articulated by Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P.:* “(1) *Predestination to the first grace is not because God foresaw our naturally good works, nor is the beginning of salutary acts due to natural causes;* (2) *predestination to glory is not because God foresaw we would continue in the performance of supernaturally meritorious acts apart from the*

*special gift of final perseverance; (3) complete predestination, in so far as it comprises the whole series of graces from the first up to glorification, is gratuitous or previous to foreseen merits.”*²

The knotty issue of how grace and freedom are related and the nature of efficacious grace—a heated dispute between Dominicans and Jesuits, the *Congregatio de Auxiliis* controversy—was put to rest by Pope Paul V in 1607 when he forbade both sides from censuring the other. It therefore remains an open theological question. The Council of Quierzy in 853 best sums up what the Church can say in the most general terms:

“that certain ones are saved, is the gift of the one who saves; that certain ones perish, however, is the deserved punishment of those who perish” (Chapter 3).

Practically, many Catholics have taken the advice of St. Ignatius Loyola in his *Spiritual Exercises* (SE):

“Granted that it be very true that no one can be saved without being predestined and without having faith and grace, still we must be very cautious about the way in which we speak of all these things and discuss them with others” (“Rules for Thinking with the Church,” SE, 14).

Reformed Statement

Some in the Reformed tradition, including Calvin, speak of two types of election: God’s election of a people, such as ancient Israel or the Christian church, and God’s election of individuals to salvation. Membership in the former leads to the hope or expectation, but not the guarantee, that one is elect in the latter sense. Baptism is the sign of membership in God’s elect people, the church, but not a guarantee that one is elect to salvation. So baptism is a sign of election, but not a guarantee of election to salvation.

Election to salvation is an eternal divine decision to choose some people to be the recipients of special saving grace. In some contexts the term predestination is synonymous with election, and in others it encompasses both election and reprobation (an eternal divine decision that results in everlasting death and punishment for some persons). The doctrine of election is closely tied to the teaching that salvation is a free gift of God (Eph. 2:8; Phil. 1:29).

Although some have held that divine election to salvation is based on God’s foreknowledge of a person’s faith or life, traditional Reformed confessions hold that, in election, God has chosen people for salvation “freely, and of his mere grace,” “without any consideration of their works” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.052; Belgic Conf., art. 16; Canons of Dort, I,9).

From before the foundation of the world, God has elected people to salvation in Christ and on the basis of Christ’s work: “Therefore, although not on account of any merit of ours, God has elected us, not directly, but in Christ, and on account of Christ, in order that those who are

²Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, O.P., *Predestination*, translated by Dom Bede Rose, O.S.B. (St. Louis: B. Herder, 1939; reprint, Rockford, IL: Tan, 1998), p. 10.

now ingrafted into Christ by faith might also be elected” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.053; see also Scots Conf., 3.08; Belgic Conf., art. 16, Canons of Dort, I,7). God not only elected us in Christ, but “appointed him to be our head, our brother, our pastor, and the great bishop of our souls” (Scots Confession, 3.08).

This divine election to salvation in Christ was for the purpose that we should be “holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ ... to the praise of his glorious grace” (Eph. 1:4-6; quoted by Second Helvetic Conf., 5.054). Furthermore, election shows both God’s mercy and God’s justice. God’s having graciously saved people from perdition shows that God is merciful, while God’s “leaving others in their ruin and fall into which they plunged themselves” shows God’s justice (Belgic Conf., art. 16).

Since Christ did not say how few or many would be saved (Luke 13:23-24), and since we do not know who is elect, we should have a good hope for all: “Although God knows who are his, and here and there mention is made of the small number of elect, yet we must hope well of all, and not rashly judge any man to be a reprobate” (Second Helvetic Conf., 5.055-56). Regarding election, then, we should speak with care and with awareness of our limited knowledge. These affirmations have a solid foundation: “No one will be lost who can be saved. The limits to salvation, whatever they may be, are known only to God. Three truths above all are certain. God is a holy God who is not to be trifled with. No one will be saved except by grace alone. And no judge could possibly be more gracious than our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ” (Study Catechism 1998 of the PCUSA, Q. & A. 49).

5. n. What is the relationship between baptism and grace?

Common Statement

Baptism is a sacrament of grace. Baptism signifies both the unmerited favor of God and the impartation of divine life that is God’s self-communication to us.

Roman Catholic Statement

With other Christians, Catholics believe that baptism is a sign of new life in Christ. It is also an instrument of the divine grace it signifies. The grace of baptism includes the grace of justification enabling the new believer to believe, hope in and love God – acts of the three theological virtues of faith, hope and charity – and to respond to the promptings and power of the Holy Spirit through imparting the traditional sevenfold gifts of the Holy Spirit (wisdom, knowledge, understanding, counsel, fortitude, piety, and fear of the Lord – Is 11: 2-3a). Through cooperation with the grace of baptism the Christian also grows more Christ-like through the increase and maturation of the moral virtues, e.g., prudence, justice, temperance, and fortitude (cf CCC, 1266).

Grace is essential to the Catholic understanding of justification and sanctification and in a profound sense one may confess that all is of grace. A summary of the traditional Catholic distinctions in the understanding of different types of grace – habitual and actual grace – is given in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

“Grace is a *participation in the life of God*... The grace of Christ is the gratuitous gift that God makes to us of his own life, infused by the Holy Spirit into our soul to heal it of sin and to sanctify it...Sanctifying grace [or deifying grace] is an habitual gift, a stable and supernatural disposition that perfects the soul itself to enable it to live with God, to act by his love. *Habitual grace*, the permanent disposition to live and act in keeping with God's call, is distinguished from actual graces which refer to God's interventions, whether at the beginning of conversion or in the course of the work of sanctification” (CCC, 1997, 1999-2000).

Catholic theology, especially in its scholastic genre, had a penchant to elaborate even further on the differences among various graces. These include the distinction between uncreated grace and created grace, that is, between God himself and the grace that God bestows. For example, there is a distinction between God's self-bestowal in the Incarnation in the person of the divine Son and the humanity of Christ that has received the fullness of grace. There is also a distinction between the indwelling of the Trinity in the just person and sanctifying grace that transforms the believer, and between the divine essence that is beheld in the beatific vision and the light of glory that enables that seeing. Sanctifying grace, therefore, is a supernatural created gift—distinct from God—that is infused by God and inhering in the person as an accidental mode of being perfecting the soul (which is a substance). Sanctifying grace, also known as habitual grace, is an infused supernatural habit given by God distinct from an innate or an acquired habit.

There are also elaborations of actual graces as in graces that illuminate the intellect or strengthen the will (grace of illumination and grace of inspiration), prevenient grace (or operating grace) preceding the act of the will (including grace which prepares and disposes one for justification) and subsequent grace (or cooperating grace) that accompanies and supports the volitional act, sufficient grace enabling a person to accomplish a salutary act and efficacious grace that secures such an accomplishment. There are also sacramental graces (proper to each sacrament), graces of state accompanying “the responsibilities of the Christian life and of the ministries within the Church” (CCC, 2004), and special or charismatic graces, that is, charisms or gifts which build up the Church in the service of charity and are therefore “oriented toward sanctifying grace and are intended for the common good” (CCC, 2003).

The Catholic doctrine of grace builds on the notion of God's action and our participation with God in our own sanctification based on *Phil 2: 12b-13*; “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling. For God is the one who, for his good purpose, works in you both to desire and to work.” It should also be stated that without grace one is capable by the light of reason and free will (although wounded by sin) to know religious and moral truths and perform morally good actions. One cannot, however, attain salvation in the absence of grace.

The fruit of grace in baptism entails regeneration, the “birth into the new life of Christ...by which man becomes an adoptive son of the Father, a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit.” It is also the beginning of the “whole organism of the Christian’s supernatural life”...namely, “the renewal of the inner man” (CCC, 1266, 1279, 2019) and is therefore accompanied by justification and sanctification.

The Catholic doctrine of justification has been the subject of much ecumenical work as reflected in the 1999 *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* promulgated by the Catholic Church and the Lutheran World Federation. In its specifically Catholic articulation justification may be defined as including “not only the remission of sins, but also the sanctification and renewal of the interior man.” Following upon God’s merciful initiative of offering forgiveness, justification is also “*the acceptance of God’s righteousness through faith in Jesus Christ. Righteousness (or ‘justice’) here means the rectitude of divine love*” (CCC, 1991).

Justification may be parsed according to its causes and was dogmatically established at the Council of Trent (1545-1563):

“The causes of this justification are: the final cause is the glory of God and of Christ and life everlasting; the efficient cause is the merciful God who *washes and sanctifies* gratuitously, signing and anointing *with the holy Spirit of promise, who is the pledge of our inheritance*, the meritorious cause is His most beloved only begotten, our Lord Jesus Christ, who, *when we were enemies, for the exceeding charity wherewith he loved us*, merited for us justification by His most holy Passion on the wood of the cross and made satisfaction for us to God the Father, the instrumental cause is the sacrament of baptism, which is the sacrament of faith, without which no man was ever justified, finally, the single formal cause is the justice of God, not that by which He Himself is just, but that by which He makes us just, that, namely, with which we being endowed by Him, are *renewed in the spirit of our mind*, and not only are we reputed but we are truly called and are just, receiving justice within us, each one according to his own measure, which the Holy Ghost distributes to every one as He wills, and according to each one’s disposition and cooperation” (Chapter VII of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent).

Although justification by faith alone is rejected——Canon IX of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent (since all the theological virtues of faith, hope and love are infused with sanctifying grace)——one may broadly speak of “justification through faith” and sanctification through charity,” (CCC, 2001). These virtues have to do with our collaboration with the grace of God and in that respect “faith is the beginning of human salvation, the foundation and root of all justification” (Chapter VIII of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent).

Reformed Statement

Baptism signifies God’s gracious love. Grace is an unmerited gift of God by which fallen humans are adopted as God’s children and granted the righteousness of Christ (Rom. 3:24; Second Helvetic Confession 5.107; Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 33, 56). God grants

forgiveness of sins to fallen people and grants to them “the perfect satisfaction, righteousness, and holiness of Christ” as an act of grace (Heidelberg Catechism Q. & A. 60, 70).

Although the grace of forgiveness and regeneration are signified by baptism, forgiveness and regeneration do not necessarily occur at the time of baptism. God’s grace and salvation are not so tied to baptism that one cannot be “regenerated or saved without it, or that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.” Nevertheless, “by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time” (Westminster Confession, 6.158-59).

Reformed Christians consider the efficacy of baptism, like the Lord’s Supper, to depend on God’s grace, working through the Spirit and the words of institution. Sacraments, even when rightly used, do not themselves have the power to confer grace. Moreover, the efficacy of a sacrament does not “depend on the piety or intention of him that doth administer it, but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers” (Westminster Confession, 6.151; see also Westminster Shorter Catechism, 7.091). Since baptism “signifies the beginning of life in Christ, not its completion, “[t]he efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God’s own will, in his appointed time” (Westminster Confession, 6.159).

5. o. What is the relationship between baptism and sanctification?

Common Statement

Baptism signifies the beginning of sanctification, the universal call to holiness for all those joined to Christ. The communication and reception of grace is always a transformative event for one’s relation to God and consequently in one’s own person.

Roman Catholic Statement

Sanctification is the increase of sanctifying grace (or an increase of justification received—Chapter X of the *Decree on Justification* of the Council of Trent). Infused by the Holy Spirit, sanctifying grace heals the soul of sin and makes it holy (the sanative [or medicinal] and elevating dimensions of grace), uniting the soul to God in Christ. In this respect a person is made pleasing to God and can grow in grace through the increase of the theological and moral virtues in one’s life, also known as the increase of justification through cooperation in good works enabled by grace. Moved by the Holy Spirit who is the master of the interior life one can genuinely merit eternal life by responding to the call to Christian perfection, the fullness of divine charity. One also prays for the grace of final perseverance even as one makes spiritual progress that bears fruit in a more intimate union with Christ.

Merit is an important dimension of the Catholic understanding of sanctification. It is a consequence of the divine initiative to associate human beings in process of their own salvation.

“The fatherly action of God is first on his own initiative, and then follows man's free acting through his collaboration, so that the merit of good works is to be attributed in the first place to the grace of God, then to the faithful. Man's merit, moreover, itself is due to God, for his good actions proceed in Christ, from the predispositions and assistance given by the Holy Spirit” (CCC, 2008).

Although “*no one can merit the initial grace of forgiveness and justification, at the beginning of conversion...[m]oved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit* for ourselves and for others the graces needed for our sanctification, for the increase of grace and charity, and for the attainment of eternal life” (CCC, 2010). In this respect all the baptized are called to holiness and to that spiritual progress that “tends toward ever more intimate union with Christ” (CCC, 2014). Catholics therefore even speak of Christian perfection but one that eschews false notions of triumphalism. “The way of perfection passes by way of the Cross...[and t]here is no holiness without renunciation and spiritual battle” (CCC, 2015).

Reformed Statement

Baptism calls God’s people to live in ways that reflect the new life they have received in Christ. Sanctification is the newness of life and progress in doing good that appears in those who have been buried with Christ and renewed by the Holy Spirit (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 70). Those who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been “buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so [they] too might walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:3-4). Thus faith, produced in God’s people by hearing God’s Word and by the work of the Holy Spirit, regenerates them and makes them new creatures in Christ, freeing them from slavery to sin (2 Cor. 5:17; Belgic Confession, art. 24). It is, moreover, “impossible for this holy faith to be unfruitful in a human being, seeing that we do not speak of an empty faith but of what Scripture calls ‘faith working through love,’ which leads a man to do by himself the works that God has commanded in his Word” (Belgic Confession, art. 24, quoting Gal. 5:6).

So when faith bears fruit, leading believers to do what God has commanded in his Word, “These works, proceeding from the good root of faith, are good and acceptable to God, since they are all sanctified by his grace. Yet they do not count toward our justification — for by faith in Christ we are justified, even before we do good works” (Belgic Confession, art. 24). “Moreover, although we do good works, we do not base our salvation on them; for we cannot do any work that is not defiled by our flesh and also worthy of punishment. And even if we could point to one, memory of a single sin is enough for God to reject that work” (Belgic Confession, art. 24). Basing our salvation on “the merit of the suffering and death of our Savior” has the benefit of avoiding the doubt, uncertainty, and torment of conscience that would come from basing our salvation on our good works (Belgic Confession, art. 24).

The growth of baptized believers in the Christian life of faith both bears witness to the liberating Gospel of Christ and “has ethical implications which not only call for personal sanctification, but also motivate Christians to strive for the realization of the will of God in all realms of life” (BEM, Baptism, III.10).

5. p. What is the relationship between baptism and the assurance of salvation?

Common Statement

Baptism is a sacrament intended to provide assurance to God’s people. For Roman Catholics, baptism is always the assurance of grace imparted and therefore of one’s entry into God’s salvific purposes. Therefore, all the baptized may take comfort and hope in the salvation yet to be consummated that God through his Word and Spirit initiates in baptism. For Reformed Christians, baptism is a means God uses to assure believers of God’s forgiveness and of God’s gracious presence.

Roman Catholic Statement

Finally, while Catholics believe that grace is always offered and even infused in baptism they may differ with Reformed Christians on the assurance of grace. The assurance of grace cannot be considered in the Catholic perspective as the assurance or certainty of salvation. The Council of Trent anathematized such assurance as articulated in the language it understood to be used by Protestant Reformers. Hence, the following canons from its *Decree on Justification*:

If anyone says that in order to obtain the remission of sins it is necessary for every man to believe with certainty and without any hesitation arising from his own weakness and indisposition that his sins are forgiven him, let him be anathema (Canon 13).

If anyone says that man is absolved from his sins and justified because he firmly believes that he is absolved and justified, or that no one is truly justified except him who believes himself justified, and that by this faith alone absolution and justification are effected, let him be anathema (Canon 14).

Eternal salvation is a matter of perseverance in grace and the object of the virtue of hope. Therefore, experiences of grace, for example, spiritual consolations, would not be interpreted as the witness of the Spirit assuring one of salvation. If the assurance of grace is intended to pose the question as to whether one is certain that he or she is in a state of grace, again the answer would be in the negative. That is, it could not be matter of absolute certitude. The same Tridentine decree states:

“For as no pious person ought to doubt the mercy of God, the merit of Christ and the virtue and efficacy of the sacraments, so each one, when he considers himself and his own weakness and indisposition, may have fear and apprehension concerning his own

grace, since no one can know with the certainty of faith, which cannot be subject to error, that he has obtained the grace of God” (Chapter IX).

The only exception would be by a special privilege of revelation. However, one may on the basis of conjecture (not certainty) be assured of receiving divine grace and abiding in it. Thomas Aquinas states: “things are known conjecturally by signs; and thus any one may know he has grace, when he is conscious of delighting in God, and of despising worldly things, and inasmuch as a man is not conscious of any mortal sin.” This can even entail “certain sweetness” in spiritual experience although “this knowledge is imperfect” (*Summa Theologiae* IIae. 112.5).

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* in answering this question implicates the difference (although not a necessary separation) between the ontological state of grace and psychological awareness of grace:

“Since it belongs to the supernatural order, grace *escapes our experience* and cannot be known except by faith. We cannot therefore rely on our feelings or our works to conclude that we are justified and saved. However, according to the Lord's words——"Thus you will know them by their fruits"——reflection on God's blessings in our life and in the lives of the saints offers us a guarantee that grace is at work in us and spurs us on to an ever greater faith and an attitude of trustful poverty” (CCC, 2005).

A pleasing illustration of this attitude is found in the reply of St. Joan of Arc to a question posed as a trap by her ecclesiastical judges:

“Asked if she knew that she was in God's grace, she replied: 'If I am not, may it please God to put me in it; if I am, may it please God to keep me there'" (CCC, 2005).

Faith it must be emphasized is a theological virtue supernaturally infused and abiding in the soul amid the consolations and desolations of the spiritual life.

Reformed Statement

Baptism is one of the means by which God assures us of forgiveness and of God’s gracious presence in and with us. Reformed Christians hold that, despite our sin, those whose sins are forgiven and who have been made new creatures in Christ may approach God with confidence and assurance. Since no one “loves us more than Jesus Christ,” who, being in the form of God, emptied himself and made himself like us (Phil. 2:6-8; Heb. 2:17), was tempted in all things as we are, made a “single offering” that “perfected for all time those who are sanctified,” and intercedes on our behalf, we may now have confidence to approach God “with a true heart in full assurance of faith,” holding fast “to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful” (Heb. 4:14-16; 10:14, 19-22). According to Hebrews, “faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1).

The assurance that believers have, like faith itself, is the work of the Holy Spirit: “Our faith and its assurance do not proceed from flesh and blood, that is to say, from natural powers within us, but are the inspiration of the Holy Ghost” (Scots Confession, 3.12). The work of the spirit in people’s hearts functions as a sort of testimony of God’s love and forgiveness, thereby providing assurance to God’s people: “We are assured of our justification by the testimony of the Holy Spirit” (Evangelical Catechism (UCC), Q. & A. 85).

The assurance believers have is an important part of true faith: “True faith is not only a knowledge and conviction that everything God reveals in his Word is true; it is also a deep-rooted assurance, created in me by the Holy Spirit through the gospel, that, out of sheer grace earned for us by Christ, not only others, but I too, have had my sins forgiven, have been made forever right with God, and have been granted salvation” (Heidelberg Catechism, Q. & A. 21).

God has instituted sacraments as means for assuring us of forgiveness and of God’s gracious presence in and with us: “The sacraments are visible words which uniquely assure and confirm that no matter how greatly I may have sinned, Christ died also for me, and comes to live in me and with me” (PCUSA Study Catechism of 1998, Q. & A. 69). In the end, however, neither the minister nor the sacrament of baptism confers grace; rather, “our Lord gives what the sacrament signifies — namely the invisible gifts and graces,” cleansing us of sin, renewing and filling our hearts with comfort, “giving us true assurance of his fatherly goodness,” and replacing our sinful self with a new self (Belgic Confession, art. 34).

The assurance of salvation that believers have, then, “comes not by inquisitive searching into the hidden and deep things of God, but by noticing within themselves, with spiritual joy and holy delight, the unmistakable fruits of election pointed out in God’s Word — such as a true faith in Christ, a childlike fear of God, a godly sorrow for their sins, a hunger and thirst for righteousness, and so on” (Canons of Dort, I, art. 12). As God’s people receive this assurance, they have “greater cause to humble themselves before God, to adore the fathomless depth of his mercies, to cleanse themselves, and to give fervent love in return to him who first so greatly loved them” (Canons of Dort, I, art. 13).

God provides assurance to believers to the end that they will not only know forgiveness, but also have courage, comfort, and hope in serving God: “God promises to all who trust in the gospel forgiveness of sins and fullness of grace, courage in the struggle for justice and peace, the presence of the Holy Spirit in trial and rejoicing, and eternal life in that kingdom which has no end” (Statement of Faith of the United Church of Christ, adapted by Robert Moss).

6. Pastoral Recommendations: Tangible Expressions of Mutual Recognition of Baptism Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue

1. In our Agreement, we have given the grounds for formal mutual recognition of the validity of our baptisms. The following are recommended to the consideration of our communions on the basis of the ecumenical commitments that bring us to the dialogue table. *It is understood that these recommendations should be implemented in accordance with existing regulations.*

2. We recommend that our local communities maintain the custom of keeping baptismal records and providing baptismal certificates when requested at various times in the Christian life of our members. Compatibility in the form and content of these documents would be sign of ecumenical cooperation and a safeguard of the validity of what we celebrate together as Christians.
3. We recommend that prominence be given to the placement of the baptismal font and water near the worshipping assembly as a sign of continuity in faith.
4. We recommend the practice of inviting members of our respective communions to reaffirm their Baptism together at times of prayer for Christian unity.
5. We recommend, where the custom of baptismal sponsors, witnesses, or godparents has been maintained, that these be selected from our respective communities of faith as a sign that Christians belonging to our communions are truly members of the Body of Christ. This is particularly important when welcoming interchurch families and their congregations to a celebration of Baptism.
6. We recommend the active participation of the families of those to be baptized in the selection of readings, intercessory prayers, and music as a way of giving tangible evidence of the unity that we share in Christ.
7. Mindful that the active participation of clergy and laity of the respective communions of the spouses is at present allowed in interchurch weddings, we also recommend the practice of inviting clergy or lay guests to offer prayers, proclaim a Scripture reading, preach, and/or confer a blessing in the rite of Baptism, maintaining respect for the rites of each communion.
8. We recommend the participation of clergy in local ministerial associations in order to facilitate the pastoral dialogues that need to take place to foster ecumenical cooperation at Baptism and at other important times in the faith journeys of Christians. Ministerial associations can be a means for fostering life-long spiritual accompaniment in faith both for clergy and for the laity whom they serve. In addition, such associations may find other creative symbolic ways to foster ecumenical sharing in a town, neighborhood, or village.
9. At the funeral rites of members of our communions, including other Christians with whom we are in ecumenical dialogue, we recommend the use of a prayer or rite (e.g. sprinkling of the casket, the white pall, etc.) as a final commendation that calls to mind the enduring gift of grace received in Baptism.
10. We recommend the use of those liturgical options already available in our official ritual books for the celebration of Baptism that enhance ecumenical awareness on the local level.

11. Mindful that in many instances local congregations may not be able to implement all these recommendations at the present time, we recommend a patient and prudent process of discernment among laity and clergy. We recognize that the journey towards full, visible unity depends on openness to the grace of God and humility before the initiatives of God's Spirit among us, which are themselves based on Baptism. Let us above all work to promote the works of charity and service not only to those who are of the household of the faith, but also to all people and to all of creation.

7. Endnotes:

ⁱ For more detailed description of the history that follows, see Maxwell Johnson, *The Rites of Christian Initiation: Their Evolution and Interpretation* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1999) and Edward Yarnold, S.J., *The Awe-Inspiring Rites of Initiation: The Origins of the R.C.I.A.* 2d ed. (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1994).

ⁱⁱ See John Riggs, unpublished paper, July 2006, p. 4.

ⁱⁱⁱ See H.O. Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Eerdmans, 1992), 178.

^{iv} J.D.C. Fisher, "Initiation: Lutheran, Anglican and Reformed Rites," in *The Study of Liturgy*, revised edition (1992), 155-157. The following historical summary is informed in part by Fisher's essay.

^v The resulting simple three part structure was:

cleansing--signation--flood prayer
exorcism--reading of Mark 10:13-16--Lord's Prayer
renunciation--profession--baptism--Lord's Prayer.

Afterward, the child is vested in a white robe. For Luther's rites, see *Luther's Works* 53 (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1965), 106-109 or J.D.C. Fisher, *Christian Initiation: The Reformation Period* (London: SPCK, 1970), 6-16 and 23-25. See also John Riggs, *Baptism in the Reformed Tradition: An Historical and Practical Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 2002), 11-13.

^{vi} His order was as follows:

"Our help is in the name of the Lord . . ."
Presentation and naming of the child
Prayer for faith and regeneration (partly based on Luther's flood prayer)
Reading of Mark 10:13-16
Naming (again) and baptism in the triune name
Clothing in white robe
Benediction [Fisher, 129-131.]

^{vii} It followed this order:

Presentation
Invitation to prayer
Lord's Prayer
Apostles' Creed
Prayer for the gift of faith and for regeneration
Reading of Mark 10:13-16
Exhortation on the gospel
Charge to the godparents to "teach this child Christian order, discipline and fear of God"
Naming of the child and baptism in the triune name (pouring)
Benediction ["A Rite of Baptism, Used at Strassburg, 1525-1530," in Fisher, 34-37.]

^{viii} His order was as follows:

Invocation "Our help is in the name of the Lord . . ."
Presentation
Baptismal exhortation, including reference to John 3 (Jesus' words to Nicodemus), an outline of the plan of redemption, and discussion of the meaning of baptism (with

emphasis on washing rather than death and resurrection). Calvin discusses baptism as a sure witness of both justification and sanctification, suggesting that baptism applies to us the benefits of Christ's death and resurrection. The exhortation concludes with a discussion of infant baptism, including Matthew's version of the blessing of the children (Matt. 19:13-15)

Invocation followed by Lord's Prayer (no reference to water)

Admonition to the godparents, including paraphrase of the creed

Baptism in the triune name.

Benediction

[See Fisher essay in *The Study of Liturgy*, 156-157; Fisher, *Christian Initiation*, 113-117; H.O. Old, *The Shaping of the Reformed Baptismal Rite in the Sixteenth Century* (Eerdmans, 1992), 172.]

^{ix} Knox's order was as follows:

Presentation

Exhortation, beginning with defense of infant baptism (including references to circumcision, as well as scriptural allusions to 1 Cor. 7:14 and Mark 10), and then proceeding to clarify that baptism is not necessary for salvation, yet performed out of obedience to Christ's command to teach us that Christ's blood washes away sins and signifies regeneration.

Admonition to parents (and godparents) to raise the baptized child in the faith

Profession of faith by father (or godfather), using Apostles' Creed

Prayer that God will sanctify and receive the infant into "the number of thy children," come to full mature confession of faith, and after death be received into heaven. This prayer concludes with the Lord's Prayer.^{ix}

Baptism in the triune name

Post-baptismal prayer giving thanks for God's goodness and praying for continued favor toward us, and "tuition and defence" of the infant baptized that by the "holy sprite, working in his harte" s/he may "so prevayle against Satan, that in the end, obeyning the victorie, he may be exalted into the libertie of thy kingdome."

[See William D. Maxwell, *The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book* (Faith Press, 1965), 105-120.]

^x It has the following structure:

Instruction on the meaning of baptism, including the themes of cleansing from sin, adoption into the covenant, and call to live in obedience to God

Invocation (Luther's flood prayer from 1523)

Address to the parents, including promise to teach the faith to the children

Baptism in the triune name

Prayer of thanksgiving

["Baptism of Children" from CRCNA Baptism forms.]

^{xi} The outline of the service is as follows:

Presentation of the child by the father (or other Christian friend)

Instruction on the meaning of baptism "touching on the Institution, Nature, Use, and ends of this Sacrament" including the several things signified and sealed by it: "that it is a Seale of the Covenant of Grace, of our Ingrafting into Christ, and of our Union with him, of Remission of Sins, Regeneration, Adoption, and Life eternall." The instruction goes on to explain the reasons for infant baptism (as did the 16th C rites), the responsibilities of the baptized to "fight against the Devill, the World and the Flesh," cautions against tying the grace of baptism to the moment of its administration, and denies that baptism is necessary for salvation.

Admonition of the congregation to "looke back to their Baptisme; to repent of their seins against their covenant with God; to stir up their faith; to improve and make the right use of their baptisme; and of the Covenant, sealed thereby betwixt God and their soules."

Exhortation of the parent to bring up the child in the Christian religion, requiring a "solemn promise for the performance of his duty."

Scriptural institution

Prayer "for sanctifying the Water to this spirituall use." The prayer includes petition that God

would join the baptism of the Spirit with the baptism of water, making the sacrament a seal of all the promises mentioned in the instruction. Specific mention of water in the prayer does not appear in the American adaptation of the Directory (1788), nor in Presbyterian baptismal liturgies, until the late 20th C. An exception is Charles Shields' 1864 publication of the 1661 BCP, which apparently did enjoy usage in some American Presbyterian churches in the 19th C.

Baptism in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost by pouring or sprinkling.

Prayer of thanksgiving. Includes thanksgiving for God's faithfulness and graciousness as well as prayer that the one baptized will be received by God into "his fatherly tuition and defence," so that if the child dies in infancy, God will receive him into glory, and if the child should live, that God will "make his Baptisme effectual to him . . . that by faith he may prevail against the devil, the world, and the flesh." This prayer echoes the language of Knox's post-baptismal prayer. [*The Westminster Directory being A Directory for the Publique Worship of God in the Three Kingdomes* (1644), with an introduction by Ian Breward (Grove Books, 1980), 19-21.]

^{xii} Hall, 74.

^{xiii} See Hall, 125.

^{xiv} Charles Shields, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and other rites and ceremonies of the church as amended by the Presbyterian Divines in the Royal Commission of 1661 and in Agreement with the Directory for Public Worship of the Presbyterian Church in the United States* (New York: Randolph & Co., 1864)

^{xv} The UPNA was a smaller Presbyterian denomination that united with the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A. to form the UPCUSA in 1957. The UPCUSA united with the Presbyterian Church in the United States in 1983 to form the current PC(USA). See Hall, 280.

^{xvi} Hall, 218 n. 109, and 220.

^{xvii} Hall, 217-218.

^{xviii} On this other hand, this was not a universal movement; the 1868 UPNA Directory, e.g., significantly abbreviated the texts of their earlier Directory, removing all prayer instructions and condensing the exhortations.

^{xix} For more on Nevin and Mercersburg, see John Williamson Nevin, *The Anxious Bench* (1843) in *Catholic and Reformed: Selected Theological Writings of John Williamson Nevin*, Eds. Charles Yrigoyen, Jr. & George Briker (Pittsburgh: The Pickwick Press, 1978) 17-126 and "Editorial Introduction to Vindication of the Revised Liturgy" and "Vindication of the Revised Liturgy (1867)" in *Catholic and Reformed*, 311-403. Secondary sources include D.G. Hart, *John Williamson Nevin: High Church Calvinist* (Phillipsburg NJ: P & R Publishing, 2005); Richard E. Wentz, *John Williamson Nevin: American Theologian* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1997); Sam Hamstra, Jr. "Nevin on Regeneration" in *Reformed Confessionalism in Nineteenth-Century America*. Eds. Sam Hamstra, Jr. & Arie J. Griffioen (Lanham MA: The American Theological Association, 1995) 153-167; and John B. Payne, "Nevin on Baptism" in *Reformed Confessionalism in Nineteenth-Century America*, 125-151.

^{xx} See Hall, 281f. Shields, however, shows another Reformed response, including a prayer to sanctify the water in both the infant and adult rites of baptism.

^{xxi} The 1906 form for baptism of infants has the following structure:

Prayer of thanksgiving for the covenant and for appointing the sacrament of
baptism to be its sign and seal and petition to receive it with true faith
Instruction on the doctrine of baptism

Vows by parents

Baptism in the triune name

Prayer of thanksgiving and intercessions for child, parents, and all children of the Church,
concluding with Lord's Prayer

^{xxii} Sid Fowler, "A Tipping Point: Forming a United Church of Christ Order of Baptism," unpublished paper prepared for the U.S. Reformed-Roman Catholic Dialogue, April 11, 2005.

^{xxiii} The introduction to the order for baptism in the UCC Book of Worship says, "Water is an essential element of baptism. Its presence and use should be boldly dramatized in the service." [*Book of Worship* (1986): 130.]

^{xxiv} The 1968 order for baptism of infants is as follows:
Words of institution (Matt. 28:18-20)
Instruction on the meaning of the sacrament (revision of 1906)

Prayer of thanksgiving for the covenant and petition to sanctify the sacrament to be the sign and seal of that covenant. Includes also self-offering of congregation

Apostles' Creed

Vows by Parents

Vows by Congregation

Baptism in triune name

[Optional declaration that the child is received into the church]

Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for child and parents

^{xxv} Words of institution (Matt. 28:18-20)

Statement of scriptural promises (Gen 17:7, Jer. 31:33-34, Matt. 26:28, Acts 2:38-39, 2 Tim. 2:11-12)

Instruction on the meaning of the sacrament

Prayer of preparation, including references to flood, exodus, and Jesus' baptism, and prayer for faith and hope in the promises

Vows by Parents

Vows by Congregation

[Mark 10:14]

Baptism in triune name

Hymn

Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for parents, congregation, and child

^{xxvi} See "Changes in CRC Baptismal Rites", unpublished paper by Lyle D. Bierma and Ronald J. Feenstra, April 1, 2005.

^{xxvii} The RCA form is as follows:

Words of institution

Statement on the meaning of baptism

Presentation

Vows (renunciations and affirmations)

Vows by the congregation

Apostles' Creed

Prayer of Thanksgiving, including references to creation, flood, exodus, and baptism of Jesus and prayer for the Holy Spirit to be poured out

[optional statement at the baptism of children]

Baptism in the triune name

Declaration and blessing (statement of receiving the baptized into the church)

Prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for the baptized

Welcome and blessing by the congregation

The CRC structure follows:

Words of institution

The Covenant of Baptism

God's covenant promises (including several options, all attending to a broad range of baptismal meanings)

Prayer of thanksgiving, including references to creation, flood, exodus, and Jesus' baptism, and prayer for faith

Our covenant promises

Promises by parents OR renunciations and affirmations by adults
Creed

Baptism in the triune name

Blessing, including prayer of thanksgiving and intercession for God's nurture of the baptized

Welcome, including congregational promise

^{xxviii} The outline is as follows: "commitments and vows"; prayer; the act of baptizing with water and the triune name; "other actions," including blessing and optional anointing; and welcoming. The expansion of the prayer may be the most significant development in this rite, including thanksgiving for God's covenant faithfulness; praise for God's

reconciling acts; and petition “that the Holy Spirit attend and empower the Baptism, make the water a water of redemption and rebirth, equip the church for faithfulness.” [W-3.3604c]

^{xxix} Directory for Worship, W-3.3603.

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^{xxx} The CRCNA alone has “into” rather than “in”: “I baptize you *into* the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.”

MAJOR CONFSSIONAL STATEMENTS IN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

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