

## Christian Studies

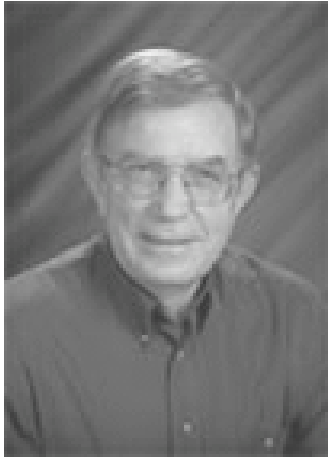
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A PUBLICATION OF THE FACULTY OF AUSTIN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

Volume 22 / 2007-2008

*Christian Studies* (ISSN-4125) is a publication of the faculty of Austin Graduate School of Theology (formerly The Institute for Christian Studies). *Christian Studies* is funded by gifts from readers and friends of the graduate school. Subscription is free upon request. Back issues are available for \$3.00 each, plus postage. Correspondence should be addressed to Michael R. Weed, Editor, *Christian Studies*, Austin Graduate School of Theology, 7640 Guadalupe Street, Austin, Texas 78752. *Christian Studies* is indexed in *Religion Index One*. Copyright Institute for Christian Studies. FAX: (512) 476-3919. Web Site: [www.austingrad.edu](http://www.austingrad.edu). E-Mail: [christian-studies-press@mail.austingrad.edu](mailto:christian-studies-press@mail.austingrad.edu).

## In Memoriam



Dr. Mike White  
1938–2007

Dr. Mike White, son of John and Frances White, was born November 26, 1938, in Danville, Illinois. He died August 31, 2007, while visiting his son Paul in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Mike received his undergraduate degree from Harding College where he met Gwen Combest, whom he married in 1960. After graduating from Harding, Mike entered the University of Illinois where he received his Ph.D. in Chemistry. Mike came to the University of Texas in 1966, where he held the Robert A. Welch Chair in the Department of Chemistry.

Mike published over 650 scholarly articles and graduated more than 50 doctoral students, many of whom are now teaching in universities around the world. In 2004 Mike

began a joint research appointment with Pacific Northwest National Laboratory in Washington State, where at the time of his death he was director of the Department of Energy's Institute for Interfacial Catalysis.

Mike was a longtime member and elder of the Brentwood Oaks Church of Christ in Austin and served on the Board of Austin Graduate School of Theology. Mike is survived by his wife Gwen; son Mark and daughter-in-law Melissa; daughter RaeAnne and son-in-law Todd Landrum and their children; and his son Paul. He is also survived by his mother, Frances, and four siblings.

A friend and administrative associate described Mike as "a mentor, a teacher, a friend, a model for righteous living, and a loving husband, father, and granddad. He treated those he met with respect and generosity, and his passing leaves a mighty gap in not just the academic and scientific community but also in the circles of faith in which he served and lived."

Mike's common exhortation to friends was "Press on." And we will press on; and because of having walked a part of the journey with Mike, we will do so with more resolve, and courage, and expectancy than had we not known him.

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## Baptism: Mode *and* Meaning Rethinking Baptismal Practices

Editor, *Christian Studies*

Three years ago, an article appeared in *Pro Ecclesia* discussing baptismal practices in evangelical churches. The author, Melanie Ross, points out that her church was one of many whose preaching traditions led *to* baptism rather than *from* baptism.<sup>1</sup> She further observes that, properly understood, baptism is not a point action in time but the initiation of a lifelong process:

Baptism is the slaying of the Old Adam and the resurrection of the new man, both of which actions must continue in us our whole life long. Thus the Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism, once begun and ever continued.<sup>2</sup>

The author continues with the equally important point that the congregation's presence at baptism is not that of spectators. Baptism is not only the occasion of the conversion of an individual; it is also an occasion for the gathering of the baptized—the church—to reaffirm their identity and continuing pilgrimage both corporately and individually: “Baptism,” the author writes,

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<sup>1</sup> Melanie Ross, “Dunking Doughnuts? Rethinking Free Church Baptismal Theology,” *Pro Ecclesia*, Vol. XIV, No. 4 (2005), 435.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 441.

“thus calls for the transformation of both the individual and the ecclesial community.”<sup>3</sup>

This attempt to recover the fuller dimensions of a biblical understanding of Christian baptism wisely recognizes that “there is no role for spectators” at Christian baptismal services.<sup>4</sup> This observation leads to expressed concern that some popular contemporary practices do little to convey the significance of the Christian rite either for the individual baptized or for the baptized community.<sup>5</sup>

Ross concludes by calling on evangelicals to give more attention to recovering the rich biblical and theological meanings of baptism—both corporately and individually—and on reflecting these meanings in baptismal practices.

Following is a suggested baptismal service which attempts to involve the one baptized and the baptized community in the fuller meanings of the biblical rite of Christian baptism.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 446.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid. Ross observes that the ritual of applause neither signifies the corporate dimension of baptism nor preserves the sense of the candidate being baptized into the church’s communal narrative.

## Baptismal Service

The New Testament contains portions of early Christian instruction, confessional or hymnic phrases, and texts reflecting early Christian baptismal practices. The following baptismal service incorporates baptismal texts from Colossians 3 and Ephesians 5. It was presented at the AGST Sermon Seminary, May 2007.

**Confession:** Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and resurrected Lord?

**Hymn(s):** *Come, Holy Spirit, Guest Divine*

### In the baptistry

**Reader:** Put to death what is earthly in you.

**Congregation:** Put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk, and untruthfulness.

**Reader:** The world walks in these, but you must now put them all away.

**Baptism occurs:** “Upon your confession...” (includes “Son of God,” “Christ” and “Lord”). *Baptismal statement incorporates “forgiveness of sins” and “reception of the Holy Spirit.”*  
*Newly baptized remains in the baptistry*

**Reader:** Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead.

**Congregation:** And Christ will give you light.

**Reader:** Put on then, as God’s chosen one(s),

**Congregation:** compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience. As the Lord forgives you, you must also forgive others.

**Reader:** Above all, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

**Congregation:** And let the peace of Christ rule in your heart.

**Prayer:** *Prayer for the newly baptized and for the baptized community, the church*

**Hymn:** *We Bless the Name of Christ the Lord*