

# CHRISTIAN STUDIES

## SCHOLARSHIP FOR THE CHURCH

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From the early days of the Restoration Movement, Churches of Christ and Christian Churches distinguished themselves from their near neighbors on the American frontier with a noticeably robust ecclesiology, reflected in, among other things, the theology and practice of baptism. Alexander Campbell and Walter Scott's "high" view of baptism stood out in the context of the Second Great Awakening, wherein salvation often came to be connected to a subjective experience of the Holy Spirit that was externally manifest in ways other than baptism. For evangelists like Charles Finney, someone could respond by approaching the "anxious seat." All of this took place apart from water baptism. Campbell's association of believers' baptism with salvation was denigrated by most evangelicals as "baptismal regeneration" and seen as a regression to salvation by works. In the eyes of many evangelicals today, baptism "for the remission of sins" is still regarded as a false teaching that undermines justification by grace through faith.

Yet not everyone is scandalized by the high view of baptism. Many evangelicals, in fact, are warming up to the teaching, and, in many circles, evangelicals are beginning to say the same thing that Churches of Christ have said all along. This shift is due, in part, to a fresh reading of the New Testament. The efficacy of baptism—or, better, the efficacy of God's work in baptism—is perhaps the clearest ecclesiological doctrine in the New Testament. In addition to the New Testament evidence, there is renewed evangelical interest in patristic resources, and the early church provides unanimous testimony of the indispensability of baptism, summed up in the Nicene Symbol's acknowledgment of "one baptism for remission of sins." The emerging ecumenical consensus, moreover, has favored a similarly high view of baptism, reflected in *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, the Faith and Order report of the World Council of Churches (for quotations, see "Obiter Dicta" in this issue).

During this year of centennial celebration of Austin Graduate School of Theology (founded in 1917), as we are encouraged to look back and look ahead, it is appropriate to examine a topic that has been—and continues to remain—pivotal to the identity and unity of the Restoration Movement. For, despite all the diversity of faith and practice that now characterizes Churches of Christ, the important place of baptism is one of the few identity markers

that most congregations have maintained. For all the attention that has been devoted to the understanding of baptism, there is always more to learn as we seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord.

To these ends, we have devoted this issue of *Christian Studies* to the topic of baptism, asking contributors to answer questions such as: What is the sacrament of baptism? How should we think about baptism? How should we practice baptism? How can our theology and practice of baptism be improved? Much of the focus will be not only on what baptism means as a punctiliar moment in time, but also on its meaning as a linear event. Although our churches have been united around passages such as Acts 2:38, there has traditionally been less reflection or consensus regarding what should lead up to baptism and what should follow it. We pray that the reflections on baptism found in these pages will be beneficial to the readers and to the church and will bring glory to God.

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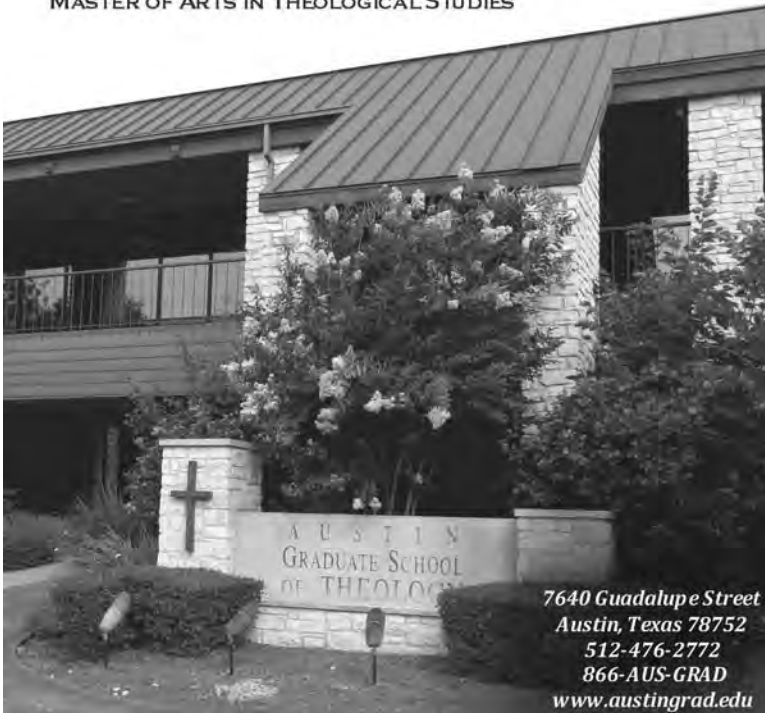


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# Baptism and the Moral Life

Allan J. McNicol

Some years ago I encountered a student who left an indelible impression upon me. He came from a privileged background. But he had fallen into a dissolute lifestyle, and after paying the price physically he began to wonder about his own spiritual outcome. Facing this situation, he took my class on Paul and joined the campus student Christian Fellowship. After studying with several students, he made the decision to follow Christ, and he asked me to baptize him.

On the given day, in the presence of a handful of students, I baptized him at the University Avenue Church. I will always remember what happened next. After his immersion he and I began to ascend the steps of the baptistery. With a booming voice that reverberated off the walls of the nearly empty church building he spoke out, “Dr. McNicol, now that I am baptized what happens if I sin?”

Like most academic teachers of Bible in the fellowship of Churches of Christ I have written on the topic of baptism.<sup>1</sup> But it occurs to me that we have a habit of analyzing carefully every aspect associated with the actual event of baptism while omitting or only discussing generally one of its most important aspects: after beginning a new life in Christ, what is supposed to happen next? How is one to conduct his or her life in light of dying and rising with Christ?

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<sup>1</sup> Allan J. McNicol, “Baptism Yesterday and Today,” *Christian Studies* 14 (1994): 33–44; “One Lord and one Body: Implications for the Common Faith of the Church,” *Christian Studies* 23 (2008–2009): 17–36; also my catechetical study, *Preparing for Baptism: Becoming Part of the Story of the People of God* (Austin: Christian Studies Press, 2001).

The New Testament letters say much about the manner of life a Christian is supposed to demonstrate, and most Christians agree that we are to grow in our moral life. But how does the new entrant into the kingdom envision this as taking place? After all, we have entered into a new order of creation (Gal 6:15; 2 Cor 5:17).

At the outset we need to remember that if we look around in the Bible God has not left us without resources in these matters. Even before the new order with Christ, God guided his people Israel through a covenant relationship which spells out with extensive precision how his people were to conduct their lives. But what about God's intentions for his people in the new order initiated by the death and resurrection of Christ? In this essay I will attempt to address how we need to understand the connections between our baptism and what is supposed to take place in the moral life that follows.

A good place to start is Gal 3:26–29. These verses bring to our attention an important theological claim for Paul. Baptized believers have entered into a community where, whether we be Jew or Greek, slave or free-person, or male or female, all are one in Christ. This claim is important for a contemporary believer in Western society. Whatever our society is, it can hardly be called “one.” The new believer finds herself in a world where, in the name of freedom, a multitude of diverse social behaviors are tolerated and encouraged. Even among those who claim obedience to Christ the church is anything but one in its approaches to race, class, and gender issues. In these areas we appear to manifest much more the wider divisions of society than the people of the new creation who have linked themselves to the new order of Christ. Have we missed Paul's point? Has he given us a prescription that is unrealizable? What is the connection between the new world we enter at baptism and our continuing pursuit of the moral life?

### **Argument and Procedure**

Far too often we have failed to understand how subversive Paul's vision of the new life in Christ really is. Even in the early church there were those who had difficulty accepting his theological position. However, I claim that Paul's theological world possesses a logic that provides coherence for believers today to shape their outlook on what is involved in life in the new creation. Thus my argument supports the claim that, when properly grasped,

Paul provides a coherent set of images that illuminate the vital connections between our baptism into Christ and our moral life in the new creation.

In a short essay we cannot focus on all the relevant passages in Paul that touch on this important question. Fortunately, by focusing on Gal 3:26–29 we can primarily attach our discussion to the explosive text of Galatians. This is important because it allows us to anchor our remarks in texts where Paul is explaining and defending the foundational principles of his theological argument against those who are not convinced. Thus we have a context in which we can assess appropriately what he has to say about several important questions concerning the connection between baptism and the structure of the moral life.

Procedurally, this essay will fall into three major parts. First, I will attempt to delineate the core principles at stake in Galatians when Paul defends the truth of the gospel against his opponents. Here he lays bare his dramatic and edgy theological proposals that he uses to brand others as purveyors of “another gospel” (Gal 1:6–9).

Second, I will seek to show how these core principles function in and give shape to his understanding of the Christian life as a new creation centered around living by the law of Christ (Gal 4:15; 6:2), while not dismissing the moral heritage of the covenant life of Israel.

Third, returning to the theme of baptism, I will attempt to show how this particular analysis illuminates why Paul regarded the baptism of believers as an event integral to the Christian enterprise. Indeed, I am concerned to point out that although baptism is important in the life of Churches of Christ, there are still important elements about it in Paul that seldom emerge in our teaching. Finally, I will briefly summarize these conclusions and commend them for serious consideration among the Christian community today.

### **The Emergence of a Foundational Pauline Theological Principle**

Not for the first time did Paul find himself needing to think through his foundational theological principles. From the church’s earliest days, difficulties had been brewing regarding the basis for welcoming and including Gentiles into the people of God. This is evident from even cursory glances at the literary record soon to appear in such writings as Galatians and the Acts of the Apostles. From the time of his call, Paul was at the center of these dis-



come in Christ, Gentile converts must accept the continuing validity of God's traditional covenant with Israel that the teachers generally considered to have a normative narrative. As with most Jews, the teachers in Galatia considered that this covenant narrative began with Abraham. Genesis 17:9–14 was crucial because it made the claim that God had inaugurated a special relationship with Abraham and his descendants forever. Thus it was possible to convince many believers that to receive these blessings culminating in Christ one must observe circumcision, the heavenly calendar of holy festivals, and the divine laws given through Moses.<sup>5</sup>

This did not sit well with Paul. For all intents and purposes such a position came close to demanding that one must become a Jew before receiving the benefits of God's promises fulfilled in Christ.<sup>6</sup> Could Paul, in the interest of unity, accept this narrative?

We know his answer. In his letter to the Galatians he asserts, "Absolutely not!" He even brands this position as "another gospel" (Gal 1:6–12). Clearly this came close to the narrative of the people of God in the past; but now it was the wrong narrative. In his letter, he argues emphatically that the basis for entrance into the people of God now takes place in faith expressed in baptism (Gal 3:26–29). Baptism puts Jew and Gentile on equal terms before God. As Reuel Lemmons used to say, "The ground at the foot of the cross is equal." In a later key text in Paul's writings he states that it is the cross that is the basis of oneness before God (Rom 3:21–26). But as it has been pointed

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Paul's opponents construed their arguments. He considers the teachers infiltrating the Galatian churches to be Jewish. This would be understandable. The reputation for Gentile moral looseness had a long history among the Jews. At the very least Paul's success in his Gentile mission would have raised eyebrows in Jerusalem among the Jewish church leaders. Knowing how church life operates, they would wonder how carefully Paul was maintaining the traditional moral heritage of the covenant.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Gal 4:10. Martyn, *Galatians*, 303, notes the special importance of certain days and feasts in Judaism. He refers the reader to important intertestamental writings such as Jubilees 16:12–18 and Sirach 44:19–20 when certain times were connected with key features of the covenant.

<sup>6</sup> Normally in this era for a Gentile to become a part of the family of Israel one would have to accept proselyte baptism. There is no record in Galatians of the teachers making this demand. Perhaps "the putting on of Christ" in Christian baptism was considered to be an appropriate substitute.

out, even in this great text on cross and atonement Paul stresses that this is “for all who believe” and “there is no distinction.”<sup>7</sup>

This theological discrimen provides the basis for Paul’s alternative narrative on Abraham and his descendants (Gal 3:6–4:31). Even today it is shocking to note how different his reading of Scripture was from the standard narrative of Israel’s story in Paul’s day.

Paul is radical, but he does not break completely with his heritage. One foundational area where he agrees with the teachers is that, in order to receive the benefits of salvation in Christ, one must accept the validity of God’s covenant with Israel. But after that, his reading of Israel’s story begins to diverge in a quite different way. He argues for a different reading of the Abraham story. Yes, Abraham is the key figure marking the beginning of the covenant story. Paul accepts the conventional Jewish reading that Abraham was a convert who, after hearing God’s call, was led to a different place. As such it is easy to accept that Abraham becomes a model convert for Gentiles of Paul’s time. Now entrenched in the land where God brought him, a crucial covenant was made promising Abraham many descendants (seed) who would bless the nations (Gen 12:3; 13:14–17; 15:4–5; 22:17–18). In these texts the proper interpretation of his descendants is crucial. Paul argued that Abraham’s true seed are not those who do “the works of the Law” but those who manifest Abraham’s faith.<sup>8</sup> Paul’s complicated argument centers around understanding the word “seed” as a collective. The true seed (descendant), the example of faith *par excellence*, was Christ. Whether Jew or Gentile, through baptism into him, all are heirs of the promised blessings and now in Christ through him, as Abraham’s descendants, constitute the Israel of God (Gal 6:16). The same heavenly Father who called Abraham to be the father of Israel, also as heavenly Father allowed Abraham’s seed to die for our sins

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<sup>7</sup> E. P. Sanders, “Paul’s Attitude Toward the Jewish People,” *Union Seminary Quarterly* 33/34 (1978): 179.

<sup>8</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Theology of Paul’s Letter to the Galatians* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 68–77. Dunn helpfully draws attention to what Paul means by “works of the Law.” Paul understands these as keeping the traditional points of covenant obligation accepted by the people of Israel. This was a far different proposition for Israel than that which is wearily repeated in a popular kind of evangelical theology where the gospel is reckoned to be the answer to a vain search for salvation through our own flawed works of personal achievement.



state it, “How do I structure and live my life so that I do not fall under the power of sin?”

It must be admitted that there is something attractive in lining up a list of “dos and don’ts” with respect to living the Christian life. Indeed, that is why many go in that direction; and when one looks at texts like Lev 18:1–5 it is easy to see why some in Paul’s world took that route with respect to keeping traditional covenantal obligations. Nowhere in the Pauline corpus does Paul address systematically what a similar process would look like after the revolutionary changes in God’s covenantal relationship with his people inaugurated by Christ. Paul is talking about real transformation, and something like that cannot be set out by a simple set of diagrams.

An important metaphor that Paul uses in Galatians to describe these changes is “freedom” (Gal 5:1–13). What should Christians think about freedom as an appropriate model while struggling to raise children in a society where traditional social norms and sexual mores are under assault? Unfortunately, this is about the point where many in the church today stop with Paul. Either they understand him as being unclear about what he means by his advocacy of freedom, or, often in conjunction with a certain reading of Rom 7:7–25, they consider him to be describing the Christian life as a torturous struggle between base desires (flesh) and the higher life of the Spirit. Either model presents problems. Consequently, many seeking a more coherent model on which to base their lives walk away and seek direction elsewhere.

On the other hand, I am suggesting that it may be worthwhile to take a second look at Paul. He has provided a remarkably fresh reading of the biblical story. One who accepts Christ and is baptized into him has become part of a new creation (Gal 6:15). Much of what we find in Paul is concerned with unpacking this point. Paul argues that reducing questions of faith to lists of “dos and don’ts” or a literal reading of texts like Leviticus 18:5 forgets that this way of structuring faith has been transmuted by Christ. For the one who is transformed by the Spirit (Gal 3:1–5) the law of Christ is “to love your

neighbor as yourself” (Gal 5:14; 6:2). As the new Torah, it all flows from that.<sup>11</sup>

However, before we give full attention to what Paul means by the process of moral transformation that takes place as we enter into the new creation, it is important that some attention be given to the way Paul now conceived of traditional Torah after the Christ event. I would be the first to admit that some of Paul’s teachings about the law (Torah) are somewhat opaque. But there is no reason to go to an extreme and claim that he wrote it off entirely as a source of direction for the believer.<sup>12</sup>

Frequently, in texts like 1 Cor 9:8–11, Paul would appeal to Torah as a basis for teaching on important issues in the church. As part of the historic covenant with God’s people, although modified by the Christ event, it is es-

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<sup>11</sup> Of course, Paul is speaking in Gal 6:2 about one who has been transformed by coming into the new creation. E. P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 97, 115, notes that in Jewish writings it was common to summarize a wide body of Torah by citing a particular commandment. He provides several examples, starting with a text like Lev 19:18 which, interestingly enough, is echoed in Gal 6:2. The net result is that Gal 6:2 needs to be read in light of the whole transformation of the believer that takes place through the Christ event. Unfortunately, many liberal commentators in the past several centuries have missed the point that Sanders is making and, reading Gal 6:2 literally, argued that this text by itself constitutes the essence of Christianity.

<sup>12</sup> It is precisely here that I believe a considerable number of biblical interpreters in the Stone-Campbell tradition have misconstrued Paul. I address this issue at some length in Allan J. McNicol, “The Israel of God,” *Christian Studies* 27 (2015): 9–16. Essentially my emphasis there is to argue that Paul, the believer in Jesus as Messiah, would have major difficulty in construing covenantal history in a progressive scheme where the Mosaic covenant no longer has much value after the emergence of another. Indeed, there are many covenants noted in Scripture in the course of Israel’s comprehensive covenantal history. Despite the obvious diversity, I believe Paul would want to say that “the covenants, the giving of the law ... the promises” (Rom 9:4) on which the people of God sustain their identity are more like a prolific well. Certainly, he would want to say that the true narrative of God’s people can only be understood in light of the coming of Christ; but he would also add that some items like circumcision and the keeping of special days have transmuted into a different role for Jewish believers. The edge of my contention is that Paul would never say, despite texts like Col 2:14, which is often misconstrued, that the previous covenants ought to be discarded. They simply have a different place. Rather, I believe, he would gravitate toward understanding them with such images as “a well of living water” or “a treasure house” that continues to sustain the essential narrative for the story of God’s people.

pecially valuable for providing moral teachings for Gentile believers who had little exposure to the people of God. Paul frequently uses language grounded in the law to stress the need for moral purity and holiness in the church. He quotes key sections of the second table of the law as normative in Rom 13:8–10. Given the tolerance for sexual promiscuity in the Greco-Roman world, Paul often gave instructions against such practices that were anchored in the law (1 Cor 6:9, 12–20; Rom 1:18–32). These texts functioned as God’s norm for the Christian believer.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, in keeping with the scriptural promises, Paul believed that a new era had dawned. Although he does not present a thoroughgoing argument about the precise moral norms to be embraced, he does present a fairly clear outline of the moral norms of the new creation. Since the importance of baptism is highlighted in this essay, in closing we will note the central role it plays both in transformation from the old order to the coming of God’s new world and in how this image is central in the growth of moral consciousness.

### **Baptism as Transformation**

Galatians 3:26–29 is a transitional summary of Paul’s major argument against the Galatian “teachers” in 3:6—4:31. By this stage in his letter Paul has set out the case that it is not by ethnic characteristics that one becomes an inheritor of God’s promises of being part of the new creation. The initial summary in Gal 3:28 underscores this point by adding two other common pairings (slave/free person and male/female).<sup>14</sup> Here we come to understand that despite ethnic, cultural, or gender differences, we are all called to be one in the spiritual community of the new creation.

This point is revisited toward the end of the letter (Gal 6:15–16). We become God’s people through our entrance into his revitalized community on

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<sup>13</sup> There is considerable discussion among scholars about tensions between Matthew and Paul. But in these matters Matthew’s supplementation of Torah with the Sermon on the Mount is not far from Paul.

<sup>14</sup> In Col 3:12 we revisit the listings of the pairs of Gal 3:28. There are some differences. Noticeably, “male and female” do not occur. Whether Colossians and Ephesians are part of a developing Pauline School is an issue for another discussion. But whatever position we take on the matter it appears clear that there is some connection with Galatians 3 (cf. Eph 4:24).

the grounds of the eschatological event of the new creation. It is not through circumcision or uncircumcision, both of which are irrelevant on this score. The reality of the new creation is such an important claim that Paul calls this a “rule” (Greek, *kanōn*) that defines the Israel of God.

What are the parameters of this world of the new creation? Above all, for Paul, its coming is the truest expression of absolute reality. In the death and resurrection of Christ a new constitutive order has broken into the world. Using traditional Jewish terminology of the two ages (the old era and the messianic age), Paul celebrated the arrival of the new order. Drawing on this terminology of the two ages, Paul believed that the people of the new age had begun to engage the previous dominant powers and were in the course of dethroning them from their previous status of power. Each new believer who enters the new order through faith and the operation of the Spirit, concretized in baptism into Christ, is further proof of the triumph of the kingdom over the old order. Until the end, believers live in an intervening time characterized by hope. This hope centers on the belief of Christ’s ultimate triumph over the evil powers and includes the coming redemption of the bodies of the people of God as a step to the full arrival of the new creation (Rom 8:18–39).

If this is not enough, for Paul there is even more. Baptism into Christ is not only a static event in time, but it also involves initiating a behavior characterized as dying and rising with Christ that persists in the Christian life. Until final redemption, the old world is still present and, as we well know, exercises considerable power and influence. So, dying with Christ is not only a past event but it is a constant feature of Christian existence.<sup>15</sup> This is an aspect of Paul’s theology that needs far greater attention in our preaching. Paul is saying that sin is active in the world as long as the creation is not fully redeemed. The presence of these powers causes physical suffering and constantly seeks to draw us deeper into a base manner of life (Rom 8:5, 6, 13). It is fascinating how Paul notices the sneers of some detractors about his physical sickness and weakness. He answers by arguing that his suffering parallels the dying and rising of Christ. The fact that God continues to grant life through death within the community of the body of Christ not only parallels

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<sup>15</sup> Robert C. Tannehill, *Dying and Rising with Christ: A Study in Pauline Theology* (Berlin: Alfred Töpelmann, 1967), 127.

Jesus' life, it is, in itself, a sign of our final redemption for which we long as Christ's risen power is brought to perfection (2 Cor 13:8–10; cf. Rom 8:17ff.; 2 Cor 4:14ff).<sup>16</sup>

Perhaps we can sum up this process by simply noting that, for Paul, true Christian life presumes that the living Christ dwells in the believer, as Paul says in Galatians 2:20, "It is no longer I but Christ who lives in me." The Christian life is a constant process of mortification and vivification (Rom 8:16–17). By gaining the small victories over sin we are constantly dying to the old life and becoming more integrated into the Christ with whom we will share ultimate glory.<sup>17</sup> This "dying to self" is how Paul suggests the Torah has been transmuted by the Christ event.

Just as each generation recalls one or several great events that seem to crystalize the era in which they lived, so every believer remembers his or her baptism. In Galatians 3:27, Paul tells his readers that they have "put on" or "clothed themselves" (*enedusasthe*) in Christ. For Paul, this "putting on" requires changing from something else. In Col 3:9–10 Paul reminds believers that they have "put off" the old person with his corresponding actions and "put on" a different lifestyle in keeping with the new order. Judith Gundry-Volf even claims that this transformation is not merely ethical but can be construed as "ontological."<sup>18</sup> While this term raises some questions, it does suggest that a critical transition has taken place in our baptism. Already in Romans 13:14, Paul uses similar terminology to urge his readers "to put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and "stop making provision for matters of sinful desire." Here again, I believe the process of dying and rising with Christ is in the background as the model of Christian life. To be sure, Paul spills a considerable amount of ink in his letters in giving advice about how this must

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<sup>16</sup> Tannehill, *Dying and Rising*, 79, 129.

<sup>17</sup> M. E. Thrall, "Paul's Understanding of Continuity Between the Present Life and the Life of the Resurrection," in *Resurrection in the New Testament*, ed. R. Bieringer, et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), 298–300.

<sup>18</sup> Judith Gundry-Volf, "Beyond Difference? Paul's Vision of a New Humanity in Galatians 3:28," in *Gospel and Gender: A Trinitarian Engagement with Being Male and Female in Christ*, ed. Douglas Atchison Campbell and Alan J. Torrance (New York: Continuum, 2003), 29–35. In fairness, Gundry-Volf's article is concerned to make the point that transformation comes in the conversion process, not in social, cultural, and other differences among believers that still remain the same.

take place among his converts. But he also is clear that our transition into Christ in our baptism is the initial transformative moment for the believer.

This can be illustrated by an incident that took place when I was teaching in the *Biblijski institut* in Zagreb, Croatia. One morning I came into class and found the students all around the seminar table unusually animated and excited. At first I thought I may have had an item of clothing out of place; but I soon discovered it was something else. Some years earlier a lady had accepted Christ and was baptized. Her husband was totally non-religious and at the time stated that he would never enter a church. The evening prior to this class meeting, however, he was baptized in the assembly room of the Zagreb Church of Christ one story below our classroom. His wife had been so transformed in her new Christian life that he decided to become a believer. As it was in the New Testament era, so it is today: Baptism ought to mark the transition from serving the powers of the old age to following another Lord.

Theologians tend to call this a sacramental understanding of baptism. I am happy with this label so long as it is understood that the actual transition to God's new world takes place through the action of the Spirit—not through the water itself or on account of the credentials of the one conducting the baptism. As a teacher who writes within the context of the Stone-Campbell heritage I have always believed our emphasis on the centrality of baptism is one of the high points of our witness. In this essay I have wondered whether, in light of Paul, we ought to push it farther. Baptism is a life-changing moment, but it is just as important to understand that it is only the beginning of a lifetime process of dying and rising with Christ.

### **Conclusion**

Many years have passed since I baptized my student at University Avenue Church. He moved to another city and I subsequently lost touch with him. Occasionally I find myself saying a brief prayer on his behalf. I trust that he came to see that through his transition into a new dominion he was only beginning a lifetime characterized by dying and rising with Christ. In this way, the tendency to return to the old order is defeated, regardless of missteps we have along the way.

In this essay, I have drawn attention to Gal 3:26–29, focusing on the centrality of Paul's reference to baptism. These verses are part of a larger argu-

ment in which the apostle claims that God's promises to Abraham are not received through adherence to the regulations of Torah but through faith in Christ. Through "putting on" Christ in baptism we have become part of the new creation and have received a divine promise to share in its ultimate fulfillment. Our hope finally abides in our existence in Christ (Gal 2:20).

If this short essay accomplishes nothing else, it will be a cautionary word that parents and teachers have an awesome responsibility for preparing the ones under their care, not only for the time of entrance into the new creation, but also for spiritual growth in the new order.

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