

“We Confess One Baptism for the Forgiving of Sins”
St George’s Anglican Church, 21 March 2010
Rev. G. Pierre Ingram, CC



SUMMARY

From the very beginning, baptism has been integrally connected with the proclamation, personal appropriation, and normative formulation (creeds) of the Christian faith. The practice of baptism originated in the radical ministry of John the Baptist, who was cleansing the people of Israel in preparation for end-time judgment. The first Christians looked to Jesus’ own baptism as a model to be imitated. Christian baptism, however, includes “something more” than the washing away of personal sins. Baptism configures us to Christ (Gal 3:27) in such a way that his saving death and resurrection become living forces in our own lives. Through baptism, the Father acknowledges us as his own sons and daughters, in the Son (Eph 1:5). By being reborn “of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5), we become temples of God whom the Holy Spirit indwells and sanctifies continually. Receiving “one baptism” (Eph 4:5) makes us members of “one body” (1 Cor 12:13), the Church of Christ on earth. Further effects of baptism are washing/ purification from sin; enlightenment; rebirth/regeneration; death and resurrection; sealing; clothing with a new self; anointing; deification; perfecting.

STUDY/DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How would you answer a Bible-believing friend who argues that water baptism, as a (merely) human ritual, is not essentially related to the gift of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?
2. What does it mean to “put on Christ” (Gal 3:27)? What if I don’t “feel” very Christlike?
3. We often refer to ourselves as “children of God.” How is this different from being created in God’s image and likeness (Gen 1:27)? How is it possible for Christ to share his Sonship with us?
4. What is the best way to understand the relationship between Christian baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit promised by the Risen Lord in Acts 1:5?
5. Among the many images and metaphors contained in Sacred Scripture and early Christian writers regarding the effects of baptism, which one might deserve to be better understood or appreciated among Christians today (and why)?