ANOTHER LOOK AT βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν

A Lexical/Exegetical Study

Presented to

Dr. Ladislav Zgusta

University of Illinois

at Urbana-Champaign

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Seminar

"Words and Their Meanings"

(National Endowment for the Humanities)

by

Philip Ray Bryan

August 1978

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Introduction

The present article constitutes a research project which the author completed in the summer of 1978 for a seminar in lexicography sponsored by the National Endowment for the Humanities. The resulting paper was never submitted for publication, although further research and conclusions have resulted from that study. The author hopes to include those findings in a forthcoming document concerning Ecclesiology. The present findings will have a major part in the conclusions relative to baptism and the church as the Body of Christ.

For the most part, the present article appears exactly as written in 1978, although the author now has access to the use of Greek, Hebrew, and italic fonts. Consequently, earlier usage of the English alphabet to transliterate Greek and Hebrew words has been changed to now use the appropriate alphabets. Similarly, underlined words have now been changed to *italicized words* when appropriate. Occasionally some typographical or grammatical errors have been corrected. A complete bibliography appears at the end.

The author welcomes any well-intentioned suggestions and constructive criticism from his colleagues, although he does not want to enter into any extensive dialogue or debate.

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February 12, 2002
Jacksonville, Texas

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A Thorny Issue

The interpretation of the Christian doctrine of baptism has for centuries been a subject of often heated debate. Hundreds of volumes have been written to explain the meaning and practice of baptism. Interpretations have ranged from sacramental to symbolic, from trine immersion to sprinkling, and from water (only) to spirit (only). Debate centers around only a handful of passages, primarily in Pauline literature; from this one might conclude that the issue would be easy to resolve. The multiplicity of answers and voluminous writings, however, reveal that the issues are not so soluble. No one could read all of the available literature. Study of the discussions of the "leading lights" of contemporary New Testament scholarship, however, leaves one feeling that they have some way missed the essential New Testament teaching on the meaning of baptism.[1] In the

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[1]The positions of present day New Testament scholarship are well articulated by: G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1963); Beasley-Murray, "Baptism, Wash," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed. Colin Brown, I (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1975), 143-54; J. Ysebaert, *Greek Baptismal Terminology: Its Origins and Early Development* (Nijmegen: Dekker & Van de Vegt N.V., 1962); Marcus Barth, "Baptism," IDBS, pp. 85-89; and G. Oepke, "βάπτω, βαπτίζω, βαπτισμός, βάπτισμα, βαπτιστής," TDNT, I (1964), 529-46.

present article criticism revolves around at least two points: lexical/grammatical and theological.

Lexical/Grammatical Problems

Most English Bibles and expositors are indiscriminate in interpreting the Greek prepositions εἰς and ἐν when used with forms of βαπτίζω. For example, in the Revised Standard Version: ἐν is seen now as *local* ("in") and now as *instrumental* ("with" or "by")--e.g., "in the Jordan River," Mk. 1:5; "in the cloud and in the sea," I Cor. 10:2; "with water . . . with the Holy Spirit," Mk. 1:8; "by one Spirit," I Cor. 12:13. The expression βαπτίζω (or βάπτισμα)[2] εἰς has "for" (Mk. 1:4, Acts 2:38), "in" (Mk. 1:9), and "into" (Acts 19:3; Rom. 6:3,4; Gal. 3:27; I Cor. 10:2; 12:13). The King James Version even has "unto" in some of these loci (I Cor. 10:2; Acts 19:3).[3]

Certainly prepositions have a variety of connotations, but it seems reasonable that the same phrases coming from the lips or pens of the same authors will always have the same meaning or usage unless context demands otherwise. This conviction is corroborated by the fact that both prepositions εἰς and ἐν often are used with forms of βάπτισμα in the same sentences.

Theological Problems

Sacramental approaches usually have the weakness of minimizing the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace through faith. As illustrated below, they might even be accused of making essentially the same errors that Paul exposes at Rome (Rom. 4) and in Galatia.

Many symbolic approaches, moreover, are so exaggeratedly metaphorical that baptism ceases to have much value or theological meaning or use. While maintaining a "local" or "quasi-local" interpretation of εἰς Χριστόν, they make the referent of most of the Pauline references a "spirit baptism" which occurs at conversion. Hence, the Pauline baptismal passages would refer only in a secondary way to baptism in water.

Both sacramental and symbolic approaches, therefore, encounter serious theological problems if the basic unity of New Testament theology is accepted as a presupposition.[4]

"A More Excellent Way"

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[2]The nominal form βάπτισμα is used in this article as a general term, including both verbal and nominal uses. Such references, therefore, do not mean that the *word* βάπτισμα appears in each of the quotations and citations.

[3]When the context does not indicate which Bible version is being cited, the reference will indicate the version. Otherwise, the translation is the author's.

[4]At least three other presuppositions underlie the present study: (a) The New Testament doctrine of justification may be summarized as: "by grace through faith." (b) Baptism in the New Testament always implies immersion. (c) New Testament baptism was administered to believers only. To establish, or argue for, these presuppositions is beyond the purpose of this study. It is the author's settled conviction that these matters are established fact.

Solution of the lexical/grammatical problem involving the expressions βάπτισμα εἰς/ἐν should provide the key to solving the larger theological problems surrounding the critical expression βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν. The purpose of the present study is to ascertain a consistent, lexical use in these expressions which will at the same time avoid the pitfalls of the sacramental and (hyper)-symbolic--in short, to find "a more excellent way"' (I Cor. 12:31b KJV).

Structure-wise, the study will include the following: (1) a cursory survey of and response to the major solutions which contemporary scholars have suggested in interpreting βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν and (2) presentation and testing of another alternative which looks toward a Semitically-oriented lexical/grammatical and psychological background to the act of Christian baptism. Since the primary purpose of this study is to set forth the author's solution, presentation of other solutions will be brief and focus primarily on that one/s which shows most contrast with the one advocated here. In the process, however, critical response to the other one/s will also enhance the author's presentation.

Survey of Contemporary Approaches

Basic Arguments

Apparently one basic assumption underlies most contemporary approaches to the function of βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν in a theology of Christian baptism. This assumption is: βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν produces the state of being ἐν Χριστῷ; baptism produces *incorporation in* or *union with* Christ. Variations appear, of course, in the reasoning of these scholars, but the total (i.e., most developed) argument runs something like this:

(1) "In Christ" is the same as being a Christian or being "saved": e.g., "Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come" (II Cor. 5:17 RSV).

(2) "In Christ" means to be "in the body of Christ."

(3) Christians have been "baptized into [to] Christ": "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into [to] Christ Jesus were baptized into [to] his death?" (Rom. 6:3 RSV); "For as many of you as were baptized into [to] Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27 RSV).

(4) Christians were "baptized by the Spirit into [to] one body" (i.e., "the body of Christ") when they were "saved": "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into [to] one body . . . " (I Cor. 12:13).

(5) Baptized people, therefore, as a result of baptism, are "in Christ" and are "in the body of Christ."

(6) Since this "one body" is "the church" (Eph. 1:22-23), all of the "saved," being in "the body," are in the mystical "body of Christ, the universal [i.e., Catholic] church."[5]

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[5]Beasley-Murray, "Baptism," pp. 146, 148, and *Baptism*, p. 147, apparently translates εἰς as "to" in order to avoid a "local" use (which is explained below) and to indicate "union" with Christ.

A number of variations occur in the general framework of this interpretation. By way of analysis, it seems best to characterize them contrastively.

Water versus Spirit

One major contrast in these approaches is as follows. One group of scholars sees baptism as the sacrament by which God/man brings about the gracious act of salvation. All those who adhere to "baptismal generation" could fit happily in this group.[6]

Many "evangelical" Protestants have the same essential interpretation of these passages, but they detect a theological conflict between sacramentalism and the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace through faith. They state, therefore, that the baptism in Romans 6:3, Galatians 3:27, and I Corinthians 12:13 is not a "water baptism" but a "spirit baptism" which occurs when a person believes in Christ.[7] These passages, then, do not speak of "baptism" as we generally use the term, but what baptism represents. Water baptism represents spirit baptism; it becomes (only) a symbol.

Local versus Final

Another difference of opinion occurs with reference to the precise use of εἰς. One can see it in a purely "local" sense. One can speak, in this interpretation, of baptism *in water*, *in fire*, *in spirit*, *in Christ*. Thus, βάπτισμα εἰς means immersion *into*, in the sense of showing the element into which one is baptized.[8]

Other scholars, observing a number of exegetical inconsistencies with any absolutely local interpretation, see a "final" or "purpose" use of εἰς. According to J. Armitage Robinson, when Paul uses the expression βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν, "he is thinking of baptism as the beginning of a relation to Christ [i.e., "in Christ"] and not the symbolism of its method."[9] In both variations, therefore, the result is ἐν

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[6]All of the scholars mentioned in n.1 apparently could be so classified (of course, it is dangerous to "label" anyone or categorically describe anyone) with the exception of Marcus Barth. A number of others could be added.

[7]Because of his interpretation of I Cor. 12:13, Marcus Barth, pp. 88-89, might be so classified. Scholars who have openly avowed such a position include: Griffith Thomas,"The Place of the Sacraments in the Teaching of St. Paul,' *The Expositor*, 8th Series, XIII (1917), 379; Ernest Best, *One Body in Christ* (London: S.P.C.K., 1955), p. 73; Frank Stagg, *New Testament Theology* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1962), p. 233; and Wallie A. Criswell, *The Holy Spirit in Today's World* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1966), p. 95. Many of the "sacramentalists" above, however, would style themselves as "evangelicals" also.

[8]Many of the scholars cited in n. 7, as well as F. H. Chase, "The Lord's Command to Baptize," JTS, VI (1904-05), 481-517, and ibid., VIII (1906-07), 161-84, could be so classified.

[9]J. A. Robinson, "In the Name," JTS, VII (1905-06), 199. See also: Ysebaert, pp. 48, 51, 53, 61; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 128; and William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of

Χριστῷ, but opinions differ as to whether εἰς Χριστόν refers to the method or not.

εἰς and εἰς τὸ ὄνομα

A number of scholars believe that βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν is a "shorthand" form of the baptismal expression βάπτισμα εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Χριστοῦ ("baptism in [or, into] the name of Christ"). This is based on the Semitic use and interchange of בְּשֵׁם and לְשֵׁם ("in the name" and "to the name").[10] Again differences appear as to the meaning.

One explanation is to interpret εἰς locally and argue that εἰς τὸ ὄνομα also should be considered local, showing the theological meaning of baptism, and not be considered a specific, spoken formula.[11] Others reason from the other direction and interpret βάπτισμα εἰς in the light of βάπτισμα εἰς τὸ ὄνομα. They perceive a "final" or "purposive" use in both phrases.[12] So, except for the Semitic elements, this approach is still a contradistinction between "local" versus "final." Both approaches, however, see βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν as *producing* ἐν Χριστῷ.

In the final analysis, therefore, the identifying mark of all of these variations is essentially the same: βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν in some way produces incorporation *in Christ* (ἐν Χριστῷ) and *in the body of Christ* (ἐν τῷ σώματι τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

Weaknesses of Contemporary Approaches

Theological Weaknesses

As evangelical Protestants have often observed, *sacramental* interpretations have serious theological weaknesses. They usually minimize the Pauline doctrine of justification by grace through faith. One might logically characterize them as making essentially the same errors that Paul fought at Rome and in Galatia. He emphasizes in Romans that Abraham was *justified* (i.e., *declared*, or *made*, *just* before God) by *believing God* (4:1-8). He then explains that this justification transpired *before* Abraham was circumcised (vv. 9-10). Circumcision, however, was "a sign . . . , a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had while uncircumcised, that he might be the father of all who believe without being circumcised . . . " (v. 11 NASB). Elsewhere (in Galatians 3) he argues that if the law (430 years later) had changed God's method of justification, it would "invalidate a covenant previously ratified by God . . . [and] nullify the promise" (Gal. 3:17 NASB). The inference to be drawn from these statements is: (1) The

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Chicago Press, 1957), p. 131, #2b.

[10]E.g., Ysebaert, pp. 49-51; Arndt and Gingrich, p. 131, #2b ; Oepke, p. 529; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 90-92, 147; "Baptism," p. 146; Hens Bietenhard, "ὄνομα, ὀνομάζω, ἐπονομάζω, ψευδώνυμος," TDNT, V (1967), 268, 274-76; James H. Moulton, *Grammar of New Testament Greek*, I (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1908), 255. Both articles by Chase are dedicated to this thesis.

[11]This Chase's position.

[12]J. A. Robinson, p. 199; Ysebaert, pp. 49-51; Bietenhard, p. 268; Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, pp. 90-92, 147.

method of justification was established historically before circumcision and prior to the Mosaic law; (2) neither the law nor circumcision changed the method of justification (i.e., faith); and (3) the parallel act of baptism was not intended to change God's method of justification. Sacramental baptism apparently would do that. It would produce a dichotomy between Old Testament and New Testament justification, a dichotomy which Paul denies.

The *"spiritual"* approach of many evangelical Protestants, however, is too symbolic. In only one of the passages cited in the argument is the "spirit" mentioned. The terms "water baptism" and "spirit baptism" never occur.[13] Admittedly, baptism *in water* and *in spirit* do appear in the Gospels and Acts, but the *baptism in spirit* is always clearly indicated by the speaker/writer and refers to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. If reception of the Spirit is synonymous with justification (or salvation), then Paul contradicts his statements about Abraham's justification and ours as Christians. If evangelical Protestants are correct, then either (1) one must have a "glossary" telling him when Paul means "water baptism" and when he means "spirit baptism," or (2) in these passages "baptism" has been so depleted of its basic meaning that no real doctrine of baptism appears in Pauline writings or, for that matter, in the whole New Testament. Some Protestant groups (e.g., Society of Friends) apparently have *spiritualized* baptism to the point that they do not practice baptism (in water)! In avoiding the excesses of sacramentalism, these scholars apparently have, one might indeed say, "thrown out the baptistery with the bath water"! As will soon be shown, this is not necessary.

Lexical/Grammatical Weaknesses

Local usage

All "local" interpretations of βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν apparently are guilty of one basic error-- failure to observe the normal distinction between ἐν and εἰς when used with βάπτισμα. To be sure, many scholars have observed that in a number of places in the New Testament εἰς, as in Modern Greek, has replaced ἐν in the local usage.[14] The essential question remains, however: Is this the case in the oft recurring phrase βάπτισμα εἰς? That localism here is an error can be demonstrated in several ways.

(a) βάπτισμα ἐν in the New Testament

The Gospels provide the basic illustration of the normal usage of βάπτισμα ἐν: "and they were being baptized by him in the Jordan River [ἐν τῷ ᾿Ιορδάνῃ]" (Mk. 1:5b; see also Mt. 3:4). Clearly ἐν is used *locally* to show the element in which the people were being immersed. An *instrumental* sense would not make sense: "with the Jordan River"! Similarly, the parallel constructions ἐν ὕδατι, ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ καὶ πυρί (Mt. 3:11) should be interpreted *locally* ("in water, in spirit, in fire") and not instrumentally ("with water," etc.). Mark also has ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ (although in the "best" MSS the

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[13]Stagg, p. 233, etc., apparently attempts to solve this problem by using the term "death baptism" in view of the term "εἰς θάνατον αὐτοῦ in Romans 6:3.

[14]For related information, see: Ysebaert, p. 48; Arndt and Gingrich, p. 229, #9; Moulton, pp. 234, 249; J. A. Robinson, p. 189; and F. Blass, A. Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* [cited hereafter as: Blass-Debrunner-Funk] (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1961), pp. 110-12.

simple locative case is used with "water"), but "fire" is omitted (Mk. 1:8). Luke, like Mark, uses the simple locative with "water" and, like Matthew, ἐν with the parallel "holy spirit and fire" (ὕδατι . . . ἐν πνεύματι ἁγίῳ; Lk. 3:16; see also Acts 1:5). Such variety suggests that the same usage is intended for the simple locative and prepositional phrases with ἐν.[15] There is no grammatical or lexical reason at all to see a change in meaning from the local expression "in the Jordan River."

One should observe also that in the Gospels and Acts, Christ is the subject (used intensively, αὐτός) of the verb "baptize" when the element used is the "spirit": "I [emphatic, ἐγώ] indeed baptize you in water . . . ; he [emphatic, αὐτός referring to Christ] will baptize you in [the holy spirit and fire" (Mt. 3:11). In Mark (1:8) and Luke (3:16) the same intensive pronouns are used. John does not say that the Holy Spirit will baptize anybody. John baptizes, and Christ will baptize. Attention will be directed later to I Corinthians 12:13 where an apparent case of "spirit baptism" appears.

(b) βάπτισμα ἐν in the Septuagint

Septuagintal usage tends to corroborate the preceding conclusions about βάπτισμα ἐν.[16] Forms of βάπτισμα appear four times in the Septuagint: IV (III) Kings 5:14, Judith 12:7, Jesus Ben Sirach 31 (34):25, and Isaiah 21:4. Βάπτισμα ἐν appears in two of these references, and ἐν is used locally:

(a) καὶ κατέβη Ναιμαν καὶ ἐβαπτίσατο ἐν τῷ Ἰορδάνῃ ἑπτάκι . . . καὶ ἐκαθαρίσθη. "and Naaman went down and dipped [himself] seven times in the Jordan . . . and he was cleansed" (IV Kings 5:14).

Note that the expression "in the Jordan" is "echoed" almost verbatim by Matthew and Mark.

(b) Judith ἐβαπτίζετο ἐν τῇ παρεμβολῇ ἐπὶ τῆς πηγῆς τοῦ ὕδατος. Judith "dipped [or, was washing herself] by the camp at the well of (the) water" (Judith 12:7).

In the latter case, the local usage does not indicate the *element* in which Judith washed, but the *place where* ("by the camp"), similar to the New Testament statement that "John was baptizing in [ἐν] the wilderness" (Mk. 1:4).

In the other two references, neither preposition appears. Therefore, only one Septuagintal reference is germane to the study at hand, and this reference tends to corroborate the position that ἐν is the Greek preposition used to indicate the element in which one is baptized.

(c) Hebrew parallels

The Hebrew verb underlying βάπτισμα in IV Kings 5:14 is טָבַל. This verb appears a number of times in the Old Testament, and the preposition בְּ always is used to indicate the element in which

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[15]Ysebaert, pp. 48-50, however, argues from the same data that the expressions are not locatives, but that they are used instrumentally. See also Oepke, p. 539, for a similar opinion.

[16]Edwin Hatch and Henry A. Redpath, *A Concordance to the Septuagint*, I (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1897), 190; Ysebaert, pp. 27-28; and Oepke, pp. 533-36.

something is dipped.[17] The Septuagint uses both βάπτω and βαπτίζω to translate טָבַל. Although *both* prepositions ἐν and εἰς are used in the Septuagint for the Hebrew בְּ, it is noteworthy that εἰς is never used with βαπτίζω. Therefore, the Hebrew Bible was precise in using בְּ with טָבַל, but the Septuagint tended to lose the distinction when used with βάπτω but retained it with the intensive form βαπτίζω. Recognition of normal Hebrew usage will be crucial in later portions of this study.

(d) Later Greek usage of ἐν

Several scholars[18] have observed that the *Didache* is indiscriminate in its usage of βάπτισμα εἰς ˴ἐν, even using both prepositions in the same function in the same context; for example: [note 18a]

βαπτίσατε . . . ἐν ὕδατι ζῶντι. ἐὰν δὲ μὴ ἔχῃς ὕδωρ ζῶν, εἰς ἄλλο ὕδωρ βάπτισον; εἰ δ'οὐ δύνασαι ἐν ψυχρῷ, ἐν θέρμῳ, "Baptize . . . in living [i.e., running] water. But if you should not have living water, baptize in [εἰς!] another water; and if you cannot in [ἐν] cold, [baptize] in [ἐν] warm."

Such indiscriminate usage is not surprising in light of subsequent developments in Modern Greek. All this shows, however, is that like the Septuagint, the authors of the *Didache*, in being unfamiliar with the Hebrew background, failed to maintain the normal local usage of ἐν. But even in the *Didache*, ἐν is seen to be the normal usage. One might ask also if εἰς ἄλλο is actually parallel in usage to ἐν ὕδατι ζῶντι, ἐν ψυχρῷ, ἐν θέρμῳ. Or is it not parallel with ὕδωρ ζῶν? In such a case εἰς ἄλλο ὕδωρ might mean "with respect to another water."[19]

(e) Purported local use of βάπτισμα εἰς

Critical evaluation of purported local use of βάπτισμα εἰς demonstrates also that such an interpretation is not required. What appears to what might be called "a classic exception" to the hypothesis set forth here appears in Mark 1:9: "In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in [εἰς] the Jordan" (RSV). This appears to disprove summarily the author's thesis. Possibly, here is a simple interchange of εἰς and ἐν.[20] This would weaken the following argument, but *it would not prove* local signification for βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν. On the other hand, is it necessary here to interpret εἰς *locally* in the sense of signifying the element in which John was baptizing? Parallel

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[17]Gerhard Lisowsky, *Konkardanz zum hebraischen alten Testament* (zweite Auflage; Stuttgart: Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1957), p. 542; and Francis Brown, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs [cited hereafter as Brown-Driver-Briggs], *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1966), p. 371.

[18]For example, Ysebaert, p. 48. [18a] Ibid.

[19]See I Corinthians 10:2 and Matthew 3:11 where both prepositions appear and the context clearly distinguishes the meaning of ἐν to be local, indicating the element in which someone was baptized; see Ysebaert, pp. 42-43, 48; and Oepke, p. 539.

[20]Arndt and Gingrich, p. 227, 1dg; and Oepke, p. 539, seem to be suspicious of a simple interchange; others, like Blass-Debrunner-Funk, p. 110, view Mk. 1:9 as a good example of such interchange.

passages in Matthew and Luke use this context and similar phraseology to show *where* Jesus was baptized:

> "Then came Jesus from Galilee to [ἐπὶ] the Jordan to John, to be baptized by him" (Mt. 3:13 RSV). Similarly, "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from [ἀπὸ, "away from"] the Jordan . . . ." (Lk. 4:1 RSV).

Apparently Matthew and Luke, in using the same tradition as Mark (or even using Mark as a source, if many synoptic-source-critical scholars are correct), did not interpret the reference to Jordan in this context other than to show the place *where* Jesus was baptized. Mark 1:5 is different, however, for it is in direct parallel with the usage in IV Kings and with the expressions "in water, in spirit, in fire."

At this stage of the study, it is necessary to evaluate briefly the view that βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν is an example of local usage, in which those who have been baptized *into* Christ are now ἐν Χριστῷ. Three considerations should show that the local interpretation here is more apparent than real.

Examine first *Romans 6:3*: "All of you who have been baptized into [εἰς] Christ Jesus were baptized into [εἰς] his death" (RSV). "Into Christ Jesus" and "into his death" are parallel constructions. One might be "in Christ" as a result of baptism *into Christ*, but would it be said that one is "in his death"? Moreover, baptism "into his death" does not produce an *ontological* reality. Otherwise, Paul would not be obligated to exhort the Romans: "you [emphatic] reckon [imperative] yourselves to be dead" (6:11). One does not have to "reckon" an ontological reality.[21]

Similarly, a closer parallel in which a *person's name* is used appears in *I Corinthians 10:2*: "And all were baptized into [εἰς] Moses in [ἐν] the cloud and in [ἐν] the sea" (RSV). What does "into Moses" mean? Does it make sense to say "in Moses" as a result of baptism?[22] Juxtaposition of "in the cloud, in the sea" in the same statement clearly shows that in this statement, ἐν is used to indicate the elements in which baptism transpires and εἰς is used to indicate something else. This example is especially significant since the noun used with εἰς is a proper noun (Moses) as in the parallel expression baptism εἰς Χριστόν.[23][24]

Close analysis of *Galatians 3:27* also shows that while baptism εἰς Χριστόν is indeed a "putting on of Christ" (Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε), the result is not a soteriological ἐν Χριστῷ. This assertion is evident from Paul's parallel statements in Romans. In Romans 13:12-14, baptized people (cf. Rom. 6:3ff.) are exhorted to "lay aside the deeds of darkness and put on [ἐνδυσώμεθα, 1 person plural; so, he includes himself!] the armor of light," to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" (ἐνδύσασθε τὸν Κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν). Surely he is not advocating rebaptism in this case. "Putting on Christ," therefore, is something

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[21]Stagg, p. 233, seems to believe otherwise, for he uses the term "death baptism."

[22]Stagg, p. 223; Best, p. 69; and Chase, (1904-05), p. 505, think so. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 128; and Ysebaert, pp. 49-50, doubt it.

[23]Ysebaert, p. 42, Beasley-Murray, *Baptism*, p. 167.

[24]See I Cor. 12:13 and Mt. 3:11 for other examples of both prepositions used in the same sentence.

other than salvation. It is not synonymous with a soteriological "in Christ." One does it at baptism, but he should do it also at other times (cf. Eph. 4:22-24). Baptism is a "putting on of Christ," but "putting on Christ" is not baptism.

(f) Conclusion

Although the closely reasoned arguments of scholars advocating a local usage of εἰς seemed decisive, close analysis has shown that this interpretation contains some serious exegetical and lexical/grammatical inconsistencies. These weaknesses are underscored by logically-sound, alternative arguments presented by proponents of other interpretations.

Final usage

The "final" or "purpose" usage of βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν as set forth by contemporary scholars really presupposes a "local" usage--although this would be denied. On the one hand, it would be denied by those who also deny that "baptism" is really "immersion."[25] On the other, it would be denied because these scholars have seen the grammatical/lexical problems inherent in the "local" position which have been outlined above.[26] Notwithstanding, the foregoing basic lexical critique of the "local" position will apply here also.[27] There must be a distinctive usage in the prepositions: βάπτισμα ἐν is used locally to show the element in which someone is immersed; εἰς has another meaning/s which neither "into," nor "in the name of," nor "to" satisfies.[28] Certainly, εἰς can be used "finally," but in the case of baptism such usage must be consistent with the data. Proponents of "final" usage have not shown consistent meaning as much as the "localists." Moreover, in many of the texts a "retrospective" ("relative to," "with reference to") or even a "causal" ("because of") interpretation could fit and certainly make better sense.[29]

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[25]E.g., J. A. Robinson, p. 189.

[26]Note that, in the preceding paragraphs, much of the documentation citing criticism of the "local" view comes primarily from "finalists."

[27]Chiefly: could "in Moses" and "in his death" be exactly parallel with "in Christ"? There must be another category of interpretation which will include all the collocations.

[28]Other scholars, of course, have made the distinction between ἐν and εἰς; e.g., A. Ben Oliver, "Is BAPTIZO used with EN and the Instrumental?" RE, XXXV (1938), 190-97; and Albert T. Bond, "Baptism Into or Unto," RE, XV (1918), 197-207. In both of these articles are references to others who hold the same position concerning the relationship between εἰς and ἐν. It seems, however, that their answers to problems of εἰς Χριστόν are not congruous with all of the data.

[29]Oliver and Bond take the "retrospective" interpretation. Julius R. Mantey, "The Causal Use of EIS in the New Testament," JBL, LXX (1951), 45-48; and "On Causal EIS Again," ibid., pp. 309-11, sees a "causal" use in many of the βάπτισμα εἰς collocations. Ralph Marcus, "On Causal EIS," ibid., pp. 129-30; and "The Elusive Causal EIS," ibid., LXXI (1952), 43-44, disagrees with Mantey. For other discussion on "causal εἰς," see also H. E. Dana and J. R. Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1955), pp. 103-05.

εἰς and εἰς τὸ ὄνομα

Although the interpretation is apparently old (e.g.,william Tyndale in the sixteenth century in translating Rom. 6:3 used the formula "baptised in the name of Jesu [sic] Christ"),[30] it seems to have two basic weaknesses: (1) It is lexically inconsistent in its interpretation of εἰς with βάπτισμα; i.e., it will not cover all of the cases. The crucial example occurs in Romans 6:3. If βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν equals βάπτισμα εἰς τὸ ὄνομα ["person"] τοῦ Χριστοῦ, does βάπτισμα εἰς τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ equal "baptism in the name [person] of his death"? Surely not! There must be another solution. Or, if εἰς is construed to be "shorthand" for εἰς τὸ ὄνομα in the sense of the baptismal formula,[31] why could it not be interpreted in Romans 6:3 and Galatians 3:27 as saying, since "you have Christian baptism, . . . "? Under this approach, εἰς τὸν Χριστόν would not be "local" or "final." It would be "descriptive."[32] This view, however, again would not satisfy the other examples of βάπτισμα εἰς, although it might throw insight into εἰς τί in Acts 19:2ff. (i.e., "in what [name] were you baptized": "What kind of baptism do you have?"). (2) Where is the Semitic evidence that "to the name" can be shortened to "to the (person himself)"? This is an assumption which cannot be substantiated in the baptismal formula per se, although much evidence has been presented with reference to the use of לְשֵׁם. There is, however, at least one interesting insight in this approach: it suggests that one might look to Semitic lexical construction (and probably psychology) to solve the problem. One solution comes to mind immediately. One of the uses of the Hebrew preposition לְ is retrospective: "with reference to, relative to." But that leads on to "A More Excellent Way"!

A More Excellent Way: Toward a Semitic Solution

Although attempts to interpret βάπτισμα εἰς as "shorthand" for βάπτισμα εἰς τὸ ὄνομα in light of supposed Semitic parallel usage have resulted in conclusions with serious defects, such methodology is nonetheless promising in the search for the proper solution of the present problem. This assertion tends to be substantiated by at least two observations: (1) Scrutiny of the βάπτισμα εἰς passages in a Hebrew New Testament[33] shows that the translation of the pertinent passages follows a rather consistent pattern. In almost all of the relevant places,[34] the particular Hebrew New Testament which was analyzed translated εἰς with לְ and ἐν with בְּ.[35] Thus, the translation of εἰς must be intelligible to (and probably preferred by) native

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[30]Luther A. Weigle, *The New Testament Octapla* (Edinburgh, New York, and Toronto: Thomas Nelson & Sons, [1962?], p. 870.

[31]E.g., J. A. Robinson, p. 200.

[32]Cf. Arndt and Gingrich, p. 131, #2a; and Oepke, pp. 539-40.

[33]Franz Delitzsch,[*Books of the New Covenant*] (Haifa: Hevra leHafacat Kitve haQodes, n.d.).

[34]Two notable exceptions include Mk. 1:9 (εἰς becomes בְּ) and Acts 19:3 (εἰς τί becomes עַל־מָה and the second εἰς is omitted in translation).

[35]Observation of this phenomenon actually led ultimately to the present study. As I observed usage of לְ in the Old Testament and its often-translated εἰς in the Septuagint, I became convinced that the answer to the problems might indeed be found in a Semitic setting.

speakers of Hebrew. This suggests that לְ might have been the Hebrew/Aramaic preposition underlying Paul's use of εἰς in baptismal phraseology. (2) Earlier lexical studies by leading Greek lexicographers and grammarians have shown that the Koine Greek of the New Testament gives evidence of considerable Semitic influence, even in the usage of εἰς.[36]

Consequently, if the Greek New Testament has been influenced grammatically and lexically by Semitic idioms and constructions, is it not very probable that this phenomenon will also occur in other types of thought patterns? If there is indeed Semitic influence on the rite of baptism, then the scholar should find *grammatical/lexical parallels in prophetic and cultic symbolism* in the Old Testament. This study will show that the Old Testament is indeed the place to find an answer which will be both lexically and theologically consistent with the rest of Pauline theology.

<div align="center">
Lexical/Grammatical Parallels in
Prophetic and Cultic Symbolism
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Semitic influence on εἰς

The index to a modern edition of *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*, by Blass, Debrunner, and Funk, contains almost a whole column which is headed "Semitisms (influence of Semitic languages on the Koine of the NT)."[37] The two usages which are most germane to the present purpose are "the predicate nominative" (#145) and "the predicate accusative" (#157). Occasionally, following Semitic usage of לְ, εἰς (plus accusative) appears as the predicate nominative (e.g., in Old Testament quotations: Mt. 19:5, 21:42, and II Cor. 6:18; and in non-quotations: I Jn. 5:8, Lk. 13:19, and Rev. 8:11).[38] Similarly, εἰς "with the accusative is sometimes used for the predicate accusative as for the predicate nominative . . . . Semitic influence is unmistakable, although Greek had approximations to this usage . . . ."[39] New Testament examples of this usage include: Matthew 21:46, Acts 7:21, 13:22, and 13:47.[40]

Old Testament usage of לְ

The definitive Brown, Driver, and Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* gives

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[36]The indexes of the grammars by Blass-Debrunner-Funk and Moulton refer to many pages of material focusing on this.

[37]Blass-Debrunner-Funk, p. 273.

[38]Ibid., p. 80. These are only some of the examples.

[39]Ibid., p. 86.

[40]Ibid., p. 87; see also Arndt and Gingrich, p. 229, #8, for a number of other examples, including apocryphal and non-biblical.

the basic meaning of לְ to be: "to, for, in regard to."[41] By amplification this lexicon notes:[42]

> *Prep.* denoting *direction* (not properly motion . . .) *towards*, or *reference to*; and hence used in many varied applications, in some of which the idea of *direction* predominates, in others that of *reference* . . . .

Of the seven major uses of לְ (discussed in approximately eight double-columned pages!) identified in this lexicon, at least two are particularly relevant for the present inquiry:[43]

> 4. *Into* (εἰς), of a transition into a new state or condition, or into a new character or office . . . . [Most predicate nominatives and accusatives would appear here.] 5. *With reference to* . . . .

A number of examples are cited for each basic definition (e.g., approximately one full column for #4 and eight and one-half columns for #5).

Significant examples of לְ
in a cultic setting

Three very interesting examples of the predicate nominative and predicate accusative usage of לְ in the Masoretic Text and εἰς in the Septuagint appear in I Kings (III in the Septuagint), Leviticus, and Judges.

I Kings 19:15-16[44]

> 15 And the LORD said to him [i.e., Elijah], "go . . . ; and when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king [מָשַׁחְתָּ אֶת־חֲזָאֵל לְמֶלֶךְ / χρίσεις εἰς βασιλέα ἐπὶ Ισραηλ] over Syria; 16 and Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king [תִּמְשַׁח לְמֶלֶךְ / χρίσεις εἰς βασιλέα] over Israel; and Elisha . . . you shall anoint to be prophet [תִּמְשַׁח לְנָבִיא / χρίσεις εἰς προφήτην] in your place" [RSV].

This quotation is significant, for it shows that both לְ and εἰς were used in predicate accusative, cultic settings to refer to the very important office or position of king or prophet that someone was assuming. At least two close parallels appear in the New Testament: "He raised up David to be their king [ἤγειρεν τὸν Δαυὶδ αὐτοῖς εἰς βασιλέα]" (Acts 13:22b RSV); and "they held him to be a prophet [εἰς προφήτην αὐτὸν εἶχον]" (Mt. 21:46 RSV).

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[41]Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 510. See ibid., p. 229, #8, #II-2e., for predicate nominative usage of לְ with הָיָה.

[42]Ibid., p. 512.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Beginning in this quotation, the mark "/" will be used to indicate Hebrew/Greek translations or parallels.

Leviticus 16:32

> 32 And the priest who is anointed [אֲשֶׁר־יִמְשַׁח אֹתוֹ / ὃν ἂν χρίσωσιν αὐτὸν] and consecrated as priest [וַאֲשֶׁר יְמַלֵּא אֶת־יָדוֹ לְכַהֵן / καὶ ὃν ἂν τελειώσουσιν τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῦ ἱερατεύειν] in his father's place shall make atonement . . . [RSV].

Although reference is made to "anointing" and "priest", the exact parallel (i.e., מָשַׁח לְכֹהֵן / χρίνω εἰς ἱερέα) does not appear. Both לְכַהֵן and ἱερατεύειν are infinitives, not nouns. Since infinitives in Greek and Hebrew function as verbal nouns, the construction is essentially the same, however. Even the Revised Standard Version renders the infinitive "priest," as if it were the nominal form (the nominal form "priest" is actually a participial form in Hebrew: "he who serves as a priest").

Judges 17:5, 12-13

> 5 And . . . he . . . installed [וַיְמַלֵּא אֶת־יַד / καὶ ἐπλήρωσεν τὴν χεῖρα] one of his sons, who became his priest [וַיְהִי־לוֹ לְכֹהֵן / καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτῷ εἰς ἱερέα] . . . 12 And Micah installed the Levite, and the young man became his priest [וַיְהִי־לוֹ הַנַּעַר לְכֹהֵן / καὶ ἐγένετο αὐτῷ εἰς ἱερέα] . . . . 13 Then Micah said, " . . . I have a Levitie as priest [הָיָה־לִי הַלֵּוִי לְכֹהֵן / ἐγένετό μοι ὁ Λευίτης εἰς ἱερέα]" [RSV].

These examples have the nominal form כֹהֵן but the precise formula as found in the I Kings example does not appear.

Moreover, at least four new (to this study) phenomena occur: (1) All three examples have the Hebrew preposition לְ *twice* in each phrase, with the first in each instance rendered by the dative in the Septuagint and the second appearing as εἰς. (2) The second preposition in each case is the "marker" for the predicate nominative. (3) In the Revised Standard Version the first two examples are translated "become" and the last one "have." (4) In all three examples, the first לְ is seen to indicate *possession* ("his priest, . . . his priest, . . . have . . . as priest"). With "have," however, the English version adds "as" to complete the relationship.

Verbs of "being" often use לְ to show the predicate nominative; Hebrew also uses the same construction to show "becoming." Since the same preposition can be used to show possession, the meaning is complicated when two instances of לְ appear in the same sentence. The solution seems to be to let the context disambiguate the usage so that a proper decision can be made as to which two uses are appearing. Probably, however, the two instances appear with the intention of showing a simple relationship (as above in lexical meaning "5. *With reference to*"). This seems especially true when the statement is repeated in reverse order:

> You shall be to me [לִי / μοι] as [or, for] a people [לְעָם / εἰς λαὸν], and I [emphatic] will be to you [לָכֶם / ὑμῖν] as [or, for] God [לֵאלֹהִים / εἰς θεόν]" Ez. 36:28b).

The Revised Standard Version, however, follows the usual translation: "You shall be my people, and I will be your God." This interpretation is possibly correct, but two-fold usage of prepositions and reversed order always intensifies the close relationship between the people or things which are being related (in this case, "God" and "people"). The Hebrew לְ is used as a "marker' or "sign" to indicate which two terms are

in relation and to indicate what the relationship is.

Preliminary conclusions

These three Old Testament examples have demonstrated how לְ / εἰς was used culticly as a "marker" to indicate: (1) predicate accusative, (2) predicate nominative, and the states of (3) possession, (4) "becoming," and (5) combinations of the same. Furthermore, an example was given of a very common usage of a double-statement in which the referents were reversed to emphasize relationships.

      In order to postulate one or more possible parallel constrictions to New Testament usage of βάπτισμα εἰς, the following points are noted for future reference: (1) In most of the pertinent New Testament citations, the verb "baptize" is in the *passive* voice followed by εἰς. In the corresponding *active* expression, the subject of the passive verb would be placed as the direct object and the εἰς phrase could be constructed as the predicate accusative. (2) One *active parallel* with a predicate accusative possibly occurs in Matthew 3:11, when John the Baptist says: "I baptize you with [probably "in" would be more correct] water for [εἰς] repentance . . ." (RSV). The problem is, however: logically, can "repentance" be a predicate accusative? Attention will be directed to this later; but for now, let it stand as a possible parallel to the Hebrew construction. (3) Finally, "anointing" and "consecration" are cultic acts, utilizing two people (agent and direct object) and a liquid or liquid-like substance, which conceivably can be seen as parallels to "baptism." Significantly, the usual form of the New Testament phrase under consideration (εἰς Χριστόν) includes a noun form of the verb "anoint."

Cultic/Prophetic acts used as "signs"
of covenant relationship

      "Sign" (אוֹת / σημεῖον) is often used in the Old Testament to define or describe certain cultic/prophetic acts. At least three examples will suffice for this study.

A sign in the cloud (Gen. 9:8-17)
God's sign

> 9 "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature . . . . 11 I establish my covenant . . . that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again . . . [will I bring] a flood to destroy the earth." 12 And God said, "This is the sign [זֹאת אוֹת / τοῦτο τὸ σημεῖον] of the covenant . . . : 13 I set my bow in the cloud [בֶּעָנָן / ἐν τῇ νεφέλῃ] and it shall be a sign [לְאוֹת / εἰς σημεῖον] of the covenant between me and the earth . . . 15 I will remember my covenant which is between me and you . . . 17 . . . This is the sign of the covenant which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth" [RSV].

Although this example is not a "cultic" sign per se, it is a good example of one of the basic collocations for "sign." God refers to His "bow in the cloud" as a "sign." It is a "sign of the covenant." It is a sign that *God* makes as a reminder. Although *God* is "reminded" of His covenant, the "bow" ultimately reminds *man* of God's promise. There is no magic or sacramentalism present. The bow does not produce the promise; the promise produces the bow.

A sign in the flesh (Gen. 17):
Man's sign

> 4 "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father [וְהָיִיתָ לְאַב / καὶ ἔσῃ πατὴρ] of a multitude of nations. . . . 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant . . . for an everlasting covenant [לִבְרִית עוֹלָם / εἰς διαθήκην αἰώνιον], to be God to you [לְךָ לֵאלֹהִים לִהְיוֹת / εἶναί σου θεὸς] and to your descendants after you. 8 . . . And I will be their God [וְהָיִיתִי לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים / καὶ ἔσομαι αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν] . . . . 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep . . . : Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant [וְהָיָה לְאוֹת בְּרִית / καὶ ἔσται εἰς σημεῖον διαθήκης] between me and you. . . . 13 . . . So shall my covenant be in your flesh [וְהָיְתָה בְרִיתִי בִּבְשַׂרְכֶם / καὶ ἔσται ἡ διαθήκη μου ἐπὶ τῆς σαρκὸς ὑμῶν] an everlasting covenant [לִבְרִית / εἰς διαθήκην]. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant" [RSV].

This important Old Testament pericope contains a number of uses of לְ / εἰς which have been noted previously, but it also does so in conjunction with the word "sign." In this example, the sign is performed by man in response to and recognition of something that God has done and will do. Very permanently (and effectively) the sign serves as a reminder to Abraham and his children (both male and female!) that God has promised to make Abraham "father" of many nations! The sign (circumcision) does not bring about the covenant, but it is done in ratification or recognition of it. Furthermore, there is a remarkable relationship between circumcision (sign) and the covenant (i.e., the referent to which the sign points). Not only is circumcision "in the flesh" (v. 11) but "covenant" is "in the flesh" also (v. 13). The sign and the reality to which it refers have become interchangeable. The sign becomes (in symbol) the covenant.

A sign in two sticks (Ez. 37:15-28):
A prophet's sign

> 16 "son of man, take a stick and write on it, 'For Judah and the children of [לִיהוּדָה וְלִבְנֵי / τὸν Ἰουδαν καὶ τοὺς υἱοὺς] Israel associated with him; then take another stick and write upon it, 'For Joseph [לְיוֹסֵף / τῷ Ιωσηφ] (the stick of Ephraim) and all the house of Israel associated with him'; 17 and join them together into one stick [אֶחָד אֶל־אֶחָד לְךָ לְעֵץ אֶחָד / σαυτῷ εἰς ῥάβδον μίαν], that they may be one in your hand [וְהָיוּ לַאֲחָדִים בְּיָדֶךָ / ἔσονται ἐν τῇ χειρί σου]. 18 And when your people say to you, 'Will you not show us what you mean by these?' [לְךָ מָה־אֵלֶּה / τί ἐστιν ταῦτά σοι] . . . 20 When the sticks on which you write are in your hand before their eyes, 21 say to them, . . . 22 and I will make them one nation [אֹתָם לְגוֹי אֶחָד / αὐτοὺς εἰς ἔθνος] in the land . . . 23 . . . and they shall be my people [לִי לְעָם / μοι εἰς λαόν], and I will be their God [לָהֶם לֵאלֹהִים / αὐτοῖς εἰς θεόν]" [RSV].

Here is a splendid example of a prophetic act in which לְ is used to make sharply the relationship between the symbol and what is symbolized. The sticks are "for Judah" (לְ) and "for Joseph" (לְ). Translators of the Septuagint apparently did not realize that לְ was a marker (pointer), for they rather inconsistently rendered לְ . . . לְ as "τὸν Ἰουδαν" (simple accusative dase) and "τῷ Ἰωσηφ" (simple dative case). Even

Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar[45] calls this example "the *Lamedh inscriptionis*," affirming that it is "untranslatable in English, and hardly more than a mere quotation mark . . . which introduces the exact wording of an inscription or title . . . ." Isaiah 8:1 is cited as another example of this usage. Brown-Driver-Briggs discusses these two references under "5.*With reference to* . . . b. denoting possession, *belonging to* . . . ."[46] Under sub-heading *(b)* of the same category, after asserting that "the so-called *Lamed auctoris*" has the same basic meaning "*belonging to, of*, or *by*," this lexicon states: "Heb. idiom also uses the לְ of possession when we would write the simple name, as Ez 38:16 . . . and Is 8:1 . . . ."[47] Although these two passages do have close parallels (e.g., use of לְ with names in a prophetical-dramatic situation), the two are not exactly the same. In Isaiah's case the dramatic effectiveness lies in the name itself and in the fact that the name was written even before the prophetess conceived the child. In Ezekiel, however, the names are necessary to indicate the meaning of bringing the two sticks (i.e., nations) into one hand. The LORD told Ezekiel to do this "before their eyes" (v. 20). The whole account presupposes that the people will realize that there is symbolism involved: "Will you not show us what you mean by these?" (v. 18). Moreover, the whole dramatic parable has to do with covenant relationship: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God" (v. 23; cf. v. 27).

In short, here is a clear example of the Hebrew preposition לְ used as a marker to point to the relationship between *one* symbol (sticks) and *another* symbol (singular forms of names) which then refers to *another* (persons) which stands metonymically for the ultimate referent being symbolized (nations of people). In no way can one interpret Ezekiel's dramatic parable in a magical or sacramental manner. He is communicating visually what God has promised that He will do.

These three examples, therefore, show quite distinctly that "signs" can be communicated by God, men, and prophets in a variety of ways. They are dramatic parables. They are symbolic acts, but not *mere* symbols!

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Corporate Implications in
Baptismal Passages

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Galatians 3:26-29

> 26 "For you are all sons through (the) faith in [ἐν] Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into [εἰς] Christ clothed yourselves with [or, put on] Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor freeman, there is not male and female: for you [emphatic] are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if [or, since] you [emphatic] belong to Christ [are of Christ], then you are Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise."

As noted above, to interpret "you . . . have clothed yourselves with Christ" as the process which incorporates one ontologically in Christ produces exegetical problems when compared with other Pauline

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[45]E. Kautzsch and A. E. Cowley, *Gesenius' Hebrew Grammar* (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1946), p. 382, #119 u.

[46]Brown-Driver-Briggs, p. 513.

[47]Ibid.

examples of this verb (e.g., Rom. 13:12-14 and Eph. 4:22-24). When seen as an example of a Semitically-based cultic/prophetic sign which communicates corporate identification, the problem appears to be resolved. The passage can be interpreted as follows.

The Galatian Christians are sons--not slaves--as a result of their faith (or even, of *Christ's* faith[fulness] and *their* responsive faith; cf. 3:22: " πίστεως [of] Jesus Christ . . . to the ones who believe") *in* Christ Jesus. They are not Ishmaelites but Israelites (children of Isaac; cf. 4:21-5:1). Jesus is "the seed" par excellence (cf. 3:16), and their baptism was a testimony of their identification with Christ. They have been baptized "into Christ," a symbolic "putting on of Christ." As a result, such distinctions as Jew and Greek, slave and freeman, etc., no longer remain. In their symbolic identification with Christ, they have testified that they are Abraham's seed and heirs of God's promises to him. Elsewhere, Paul uses the typology of baptism to state that Christians have been circumcised (Col. 2:11-12). So, as in Paul's explanation of Abraham's justification by belief, here he explains that Christians share in God's promises to Abraham. Just as Abraham used a sign to point toward the Lord's promise and his descendants identify with *him* symbolically, so Christians symbolically identify with *Christ* in baptism and testify to their faith that they share with Christ in the fulfillment of God's promise.

Romans 6:1-14

1 "What then shall we say? 'Let us continue in (the) sin, in order that (the) grace may abound'? 2 By no means [or, may it not be]; we who have died to (the) sin--how shall we still live in it? 3 Or are you ignorant that as many of us as have been baptized into [εἰς] Christ Jesus were baptized into [εἰς] his death? 4 Therefore, we were buried with him through (the) baptism into [in reference to (?), because of (?)] (the) death, in order that just as Christ was raised from [the] dead [pl. form] through the glory of the Father, so even we [emphatic] would walk in newness of life. 5 For if we have become united with the likeness of his death, certainly we shall also [be united with the likeness] of the [i.e., his] resurrection; 6 knowing this, that our old man has been crucified with [him], in order that the body of (the) sin might be wiped out, that we should no longer be slaves to (the) sin; 7 for he who has died has been set free from (the) sin. 8 And if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from [the] dead [pl. form] never dies again [or, no longer], death no longer rules him. 10 For what [or, the death] he died, he died to sin once and for all; and what [or, the life] he lives, he lives to (the) God. 11 So you also must consider [or, reckon] yourselves indeed to be dead [pl. form] to (the) sin but alive [pl. form; or, living people] to (the) God in Christ Jesus.

12 Therefore, stop allowing (the) sin to reign [or, do not let sin reign continually; pres. imperative] in your mortal bodies [sing. form] resulting in obedience to its desires, 13 neither continue presenting [pres. imperative] yourselves to sin [as] tools of unrighteousness, but [emphatic] present [aor. imperative; or, start presenting] yourselves to God as [people] living from [the] dead [pl. form] and your members to (the) God [as] tools of righteousness; 14 for sin shall not rule you, for you are not under law but under grace."

Romans 6:1-14 constitutes the most detailed discussion of baptism in the New Testament. At least two points should be kept in mind as one interprets Paul's use of βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν in this setting: the larger setting of Romans and the intended purpose (lesson) of this pericope. In the first five chapters, Paul has been emphasizing justification (salvation) by grace through faith (cf. especially 4:9, 11). In chapter six he begins a discussion of the implications of practical, Christian living. He uses baptism as a didactic device to serve as a basis for his first exhortations in this area. In short, Paul says that Christians should "live up to" what they

professed in baptism.

Besides having the exegetical and lexical problems noted above, neither hyper-symbolic nor sacramental approaches do full justice to the arguments utilized by Paul in this passage. Recognition of a cultic/prophetic sign of corporate identification appears to be the best approach to proper interpretation. The validity of this assertion can be supported by several other observations.

(1) A number of *grammatical and stylistic data* are congruous with a symbolic interpretation. (a) The *formula* βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν / θάνατον fits the Semitic pattern which was observed in Galatians 3:27. Ἐἰς is the "pointer" which links the symbolic (immersion in water) with its referent (Christ's death, burial, and resurrection). (b) The *words* ὁμοιώματι ("likeness"; v. 5) and ὡσεὶ ("as," "like"; "as if"; v. 13) echo the comparison between baptism and its referent/s. (c) *Corporate identification* is affirmed repeatedly in various uses of σύν ("with"), primarily in compound words: "buried with" (v. 4), "united with" (v. 5), "crucified with" (v. 6), "with" and "live with" (v. 8).[48] (d) *Logical comparison* between symbol and referent or *deductions based on symbols* occur in almost every sentence: "therefore . . . in order that just as . . . so we also" (v. 4), "for if . . . certainly also" (v. 5), "knowing that . . . [then]" (v. 9), and "so you also" (v. 11). "For" (γὰρ) appears five times. (e) *Personification* of "sin" and "death" occurs in almost every verse.

(2) *Paul's argument* for Christian living presupposes an actual baptism in water. Without baptism in water, his argument would have no rationale. (a) The *major basis* for his detailed discussion *is the question in verse three*. The question is not directed to βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν per se; it is addressed to the subject of *death*: "Don't you know that baptism εἰς Christ is baptism εἰς his death?" Since baptism refers to death and burial, the Christian is "dead to sin." (b) But *baptism also involves resurrection and life*. Death can have no real meaning in this context without resurrection. Therefore, the Christian, being (simultaneously) free from death and dead to sin, can serve *God* (not *sin*) and "walk in newness of life." If Paul was indeed referring to ontological or absolute realities (i.e., death and sin), he would not need to tell the Romans to "also consider yourselves dead . . . but alive . . . " (v. 11). Nor would he have to exhort them to "stop presenting [themselves] . . . to sin, but start presenting [themselves] . . . to God" (v. 13).

(3) *Sacramentalism is in error* because of Paul's need to exhort them to change, and *hyper-symbolism* is incorrect because it would tend to eliminate real baptism (i.e., in water), as well as see absolute realities while missing the significance of personification of sin and death.

(4) Only a *cultic/prophetic symbolism* would serve Paul's arguments. Therefore, here also βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν makes better sense when interpreted Semitically rather than "locally" or "finally."

I Corinthians 12:12-13

12 "For just as the [human, implied] body is one and has many members, but all the members of the [i.e., that] body while being many are one [human, implied] body, so also is (the) Christ; 13 in fact [or, for also] in [ἐν] one Spirit [or, spirit] have we all been baptized into [εἰς] one body [i.e., Christ, implied], whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or freemen, and we all have been made to drink one Spirit [or, spirit]."

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[48]Significantly, the Greek verb συμβάλλω, from which "symbol" is derived, has as two of its meanings: "to throw together, to compare."

I Corinthians 12:12-13 is the last of the βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν passages. In several respects it bears an affinity to the other ones; e.g., the formula βάπτισμα εἰς appears, although "one body" is substituted for "Christ" (Gal. 3:27) and "Christ Jesus" (Rom. 6:3). Also both prepositions εἰς and ἐν occur in the same statement. Verse 13 has been a pivotal statement in many theological discussions and confessional documents dealing with baptism, Holy Spirit, and the church. Proper interpretation is very critical, therefore, for theological and doctrinal understanding. Dogmatism on this passage invites possible embarrassment, for defenders of the various positions often have good, logical arguments for their respective interpretations.[49]

Probably, however, expositors have been reading into this statement more than Paul intended. The conclusion of the present study is that, like other βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν passages, this one too should be interpreted in the light of Semitic corporate symbolism. Indeed, *here is the best example of this phenomenon*. Several considerations should verify such an assertion. Examination will focus first on a phrase-by-phrase analysis of the pertinent expressions. A summary statement then will demonstrate the cultic/prophetic interpretation.

(1) Both Greek prepositions εἰς and ἐν occur in verse 13, but apparently ἐν does not have the "local" usage that it has in I Corinthians 10:2 ("in the cloud, in the sea") or in the Gospels ("in water, in spirit"; Mt. 3:11, etc.). These expressions show the element in which one is immersed; i.e., where the sign takes place. Such ἐν usage echoes the "bow in the cloud" (Gen. 9:13) and Abraham's circumcision "in the flesh" (Gen. 17:11). At least three considerations show clearly that ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ("in one spirit") does not indicate location in this case: (a) the expression comes first in the clause; (b) "*one* spirit" is unique to this passage; i.e., as a baptism passage; and (c) "in one spirit" parallels a number of similar expressions in the preceding part of the chapter. Because of these and similar observations, many scholars (and Bible versions) have interpreted the expression instrumentally ("by one spirit"). In such an expression the Holy Spirit is the one who baptizes people "into one body."

This interpretation is very questionable, however, for it makes an assertion so different from Paul's other baptismal discussions, as well as the rest of New Testament baptismal teaching (e.g., *Jesus* baptizes "in the spirit"; except possibly for here, the Spirit is never said to baptize anyone). Moreover, it disregards the crucial expressions of the same phrase occurring in the immediate context. In the first eleven verses of this chapter, ἐν appears with "spirit" at least four other times (vv. 3, 9). The word ἕν ("one"), or its synonyms, also appears a number of times. The usage in verse 9 might be interpreted instrumentally. But verses 2-3 shed more light on the matter. To "speak 'in God's [or, the Holy] Spirit'" means "'to be led by the Spirit' to speak," to be "under the control of God's Spirit." Forms of the word "led" even appear twice in the same verse (v. 2) in reference to demon (?) control. ἐν πνεύματι definitely parallels other New Testament usage in this respect (e.g., "in [the control of] an unclean spirit," Mk. 1:23; and "in the [Holy] Spirit," Rev. 1:10). Therefore, following this line of reasoning, *the meaning is: "in [i.e., by the leading of] one [probably "the same"; cf. 1 Cor. 12:9, 11] we have all been baptized . . . ." The Spirit did not baptize, but he led the Christians to be baptized (in water)*.

(2) The prevailing interpretations of εἰς have been: "into one body" ("local" and "final") and "to make one body" (e.g., even William Tyndale adopted this meaning back in the sixteenth century[50]). The exegetical

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[49]In my own case, I spent hours trying to come up with *any* interpretation that could be "airtight."

[50]Weigle, p. 972.

problems of the first two views have been noted above several times. The last one, however, could very well fit into Semitic idiom. The cultic/prophetic symbolism, however, would be absent; and such an interpretation is not necessary nor does it contribute to Paul's argument. His statement that Christ may be viewed (metaphorically) as one body with many members is based [Καὶ γὰρ, "in fact"] on the realization that a number of different people (Jews, Greeks, etc.), sharing the *same* spirit and being led by the *same* spirit (Christ's), have in baptism identified themselves with the *same* person, Christ, who in his physical body died, was buried, and was raised.

The simplest interpretation of εἰς ἓν σῶμα lies in recognizing the Paul is saying (in slightly different terminology because of his immediate purposes) essentially what he said in Romans 6 and Galatians 3. *The "one body" is Christ!* He says so in verse 12. Here is an example of the "fluidity" of corporate terms. In verse 12 "one *body* is undoubtedly a *human* body. In verse 13 "one *body*" is Christ. In verses 14-18 the body is a human body, but the church is, as it were, "waiting in the wings." Finally, in verse 27, Paul says, "Now *you* [emphatic, Corinthians, implied] are Christ's *body*." A similar case of this fluidity appears earlier (10:16-17) when the term "body" changes from physical to metaphorical. (3) The three-fold usage of "one" (ἕν) in verse 13 suggests the meaning "same" (cf. vv. 4-11).

Paul's argument, therefore, seems to be this: (a) Baptism of many different people was under the leadership of the same Spirit; (b) all of the baptized people were baptized into the same person, Christ; (c) all of the people have "drunk the same Spirit" (i.e., he is indwelling them); (d) all of these common expressions and relationships and common symbolic acts of testimony produce unity among Christians. The Holy Spirit is important--not because he baptizes people, but because he dwells in Christians and leads them to make the same testimony to (or, identification with) the Lord Jesus Christ. Baptism per se does not bring into existence "the body" or incorporate anyone in it, but it is an underlying pre-condition for the church to be the body of Christ. As in Old Testament symbolism, identification with God's promise produces identification with God's people.

Summary and Conclusion

The present study (1) began with a brief survey of prevalent, contemporary approaches to interpreting the Pauline expression βάπτισμα εἰς Χριστόν. (2) Analysis showed that both sacramentalist and hyper-symbolic approaches have serious exegetical and theological inconsistencies. Moreover, "local" and "final" interpretations of βάπτισμα εἰς, as well as "instrumental" views of βάπτισμα ἐν, were shown to be lexically and grammatically inadequate. (3) Looking toward a Semitically-oriented solution, analysis found a (common) Semitic, cultic/prophetic formula underlying the βάπτισμα εἰς / ἐν expressions. (4) This cultic/prophetic formula was then utilized in interpreting various New Testament baptismal passages on the basis of Hebrew corporate personality. The conclusion was that βάπτισμα εἰς refers indeed to the cultic/prophetic symbolism employed in the act of baptism. In baptism, one identifies dramatically with Christ, and in doing so, he identifies also with others who have the same faith in Christ.

Baptism, therefore, is a dramatic identification; it is neither sacramental nor unnecessary. To this Bible student, the preceding cultic/prophetic-sign approach most consistently observes idiomatic distinctions of language, maintains the New Testament doctrine of justification by grace through faith, and preserves the meaning and significance of believer's baptism. In short, it communicates the Biblical significance of baptism.

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IDBS: *Crim, Keith,* et al*., eds. The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible: Supplementary Volume*. Nashville, Tenn.: Abingdon Press, 1976.

JBL: *Journal of Biblical Literature*.

JT;   *Journal of Theological Studies*.

RE: *Review and Expositor*.

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