



SCRIPTURE, BAPTISM AND THE ECUMENICAL MOVEMENT

Two Lectures

by

Prof. Dr. Dale Moody

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The following, all who have studied at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, join in commending these lectures to members of Christian Churches and Churches of Christ as well as to all who love and serve the Lord Jesus Christ.

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INTRODUCTION

When I heard that Prof. Dale Moody of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary was the first non-Roman Christian scholar to be invited to teach at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome and that he was lecturing on Christian Baptism, I invited him to come to our Institute for the Study of Christian Origins in Tuebingen. Our correspondence resulted in the lectures which are reproduced here (with only minor editing) from the tape recordings of his two delightful and erudite presentations.

Prof. Moody is a systematic theologian who takes both the New Testament and the present time seriously. As he says in his lecture, "If it's important to thousands and millions of Christians, then it's important for the Church. . . . I never consider a thing unimportant for me, if it's important for other Christians." And as these lectures clearly indicate, Prof. Moody at the same time strongly affirms the normative function of the New Testament in the doing of theology and the practice of the Church. It is my hope that these lectures (both by what is affirmed and by what is left open) will stimulate many readers to go on to Dr. Moody's book, Baptism: Foundation for Christian Unity (1967), in which he has put us all in his debt by his clear and critical discussion of current thinking about baptism.

These lectures were the occasion for intensive discussion with Prof. Moody when he was here in Tuebingen, and they continue to provide a basis for extensive discussion with the Christian community here. For to talk about baptism is to discuss the nature of the Church, the relationship of innocence and sin, the meaning of faith and (as Dr. Moody stresses) the action of the Holy Spirit. These are crucial concerns for all Christians -- and I am very pleased to recommend these lectures to all who care about the reform and renewal of Christian life and thought.

S. Scott Bartlett, Ph.D.
 Director of the Institute

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BAPTISM IN THE PAULINE TRADITION

First of all, I would like to thank Professor Bartchy for his good introduction; and the story that he had in mind should relax this group, who may doubt that a Southern Baptist is ecumenical. I have already met both Roman Catholics and Protestants in the room, and the story is one I like to tell about the book on baptism published in 1968. Very simply put, I, a Baptist, wrote it; the Episcopalians, or Anglicans, gave me a Doctor of Philosophy degree for it; the Presbyterians published it; and the Roman Catholics read it. At least they read it enough that they invited me to come to Rome. Scott Bartchy has asked me to concentrate on the Biblical, on the New Testament theology and practice of baptism, relating it to some of the issues we confront today, and I have agreed to do that. However, my book that he mentioned starts with proselyte baptism in the second century B.C. and comes down to the present. So I have not written exclusively on the New Testament teachings on baptism, but I have covered the Greek and the Latin and the Protestant and the free church traditions in my book. But I am very happy to concentrate on the New Testament alone and to apply it to the present because I believe that one of the things we have in common, not only in Protestantism, but also in Catholicism, is Holy Scripture.

Paul's Doctrine of Baptism

Perhaps you know that when I choose the topic of Paul's doctrine of baptism, or baptism in the Pauline tradition, I would like to describe the topic so that I won't have to get bogged down in

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the question of authorship and dates. That is, I will use everything that is called Pauline literature in the New Testament. Of course the first two letters of Paul, I and II Thessalonians, have nothing to say about baptism directly. However, I would think that there are some materials that may be related to baptism, but that would be speculative. We will concentrate on the letters that are called his primary letters, I and II Corinthians, Galatians and Romans; and then we'll go on to the prison letters where there are two passages, and finally to the pastoral letters where there is one. Thus I have chosen about 10 very central passages in the Pauline tradition on baptism. Perhaps you know that the finest survey of Paul's doctrine of baptism is by a Roman Catholic scholar in Germany, Rudolph Schnackenburg of Würzburg, Germany. Schnackenburg's book in English is called Paul's Doctrine of Baptism - and you may be interested to know that a Baptist who is one of my closest friends translated it from German into English. So we at least have reached an ecumenical level when Baptists are translating Roman Catholic books on baptism into English. Seriously, I would say the best one volume for expansion and background of what I am trying to say tonight would be Schnackenburg's book.

What Does Baptism Mean?

Now I believe the first question we should raise is the question of the meaning of baptism. Before we get into questions of practice and polity, I think that we should first of all ask, what is the meaning of baptism. Now I think the meaning certainly does lead to method or to polity or to practice, or whatever term you choose. So I want to start at the place which I think is the most profitable place to start, and that is with the first passage chronologically in which Paul mentions baptism. Now my good friend, G. Beasley-Murray, who translated Schnackenburg, says the

place to start is Romans 6. I will differ with him as we come to Romans 6, for I think the place to start is I Corinthians 1.

As I see it, the Pauline doctrine of baptism is three-fold. That is, the meaning of baptism is three-fold in Paul's letters. Now the first two that we're going to mention are also found in places other than Paul in the New Testament. Thirdly we'll deal in a special way with the distinctive Pauline meaning of baptism.

Baptism Means Identification with Christ

The first thing that we meet perhaps could be called, for want of a better term, identification. I think that this word, identification, which I realize is a psychological term, is a very appropriate way to describe baptism "in the name" in other words, when we are baptized in the name of Christ, we are identified with Him. Now of course this is the distinctive doctrine of baptism in the Acts of the Apostles, which we'll say something about tomorrow night; but the clearest meaning is not found in the Acts of the Apostles. The clearest interpretation is to be found in the first chapter of I Corinthians and with that we want to begin to tie Paul's thinking onto the wider meaning of baptism in the New Testament. Through identification. The apostle, beginning in chapter one, verse 10, says, "I beseech you brothers, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ..." [It's interesting the way the section starts] "...through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you all speak the same thing, that there be no schism among you" [That's contemporary, isn't it? Like an old German farmer in Kentucky said about the church once, 'There's just too much shizz in the church today.'] "and that you be united with the same mind and with the same judgment. For it has been pointed out to me, my brothers, by those of the household of Chloe," [those who belong to

Chloe] "that there is strife among you. Now this I say, that each one of you says, I belong to Paul, I belong to Apollos, I belong to Cephas, I belong to Christ." You see, Paul had converted the first group of Corinthians to Christ. Apollos, who had come along to follow him, had no doubt converted about the same number; and you know how the Acts of the Apostles describes what a spiritual torrent this man was--mighty in the scriptures, taught everything accurately, and if we translated the Greek, I think this is the way it should be translated: "he was boiling over with the Spirit. This Apollos had come in and the church had become divided particularly between those who had been converted by Paul and those who had been converted by Apollos. Then there were those who said "we belong to Cephas," perhaps the Jewish Christians. And then there were those who said, "we belong to Christ."

Now it seems that Paul is asking a question here which is very contemporary. Three questions here: is Christ divided? [Has he been parceled out among you? Do you have a little piece of Him? I have another little piece. With Paul, that's an absurdity.] Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? And here is the meaning of baptism: Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? That, to me, is the clearest question to bring out the meaning of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ or in the name of the Lord Jesus, whichever formula we happen to follow. In other words, you shouldn't go around saying you belong to Paul unless Paul was crucified for you and unless you were baptized into Paul's name, which simply means that to be baptized into the name of Paul means that you belong to Paul. To be baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus would mean that you belong to the Lord Jesus. I believe that simple statement of identification is the meaning of baptism in the name. He goes ahead to make this comment, "I'm thankful that I baptized none of you except Crispus and

Gaius" [Crispus, a Jew and Gaius, a Greek] "and there be someone among you who says you were baptized in my name." Three times this has come up. He begins the paragraph by saying, "I beseech you through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.... Now you baptized in the name of Paul?... I thank God you baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius lest you should say you were baptized in my name." Then he remembers, "I baptized also the household of Stephanus." We'll say something about the household baptisms later. "As for the rest, I do not know whether I baptized any other. Because Christ did not send me to baptize, but to evangelize, not in excellent language lest the cross of Christ should be emptied of its power." So much for that which, as I say, is the thing we associate most with the Acts of the Apostles, but here we see the first meaning of baptism in the Pauline tradition--identification with Christ, baptized into His name, you belong to Him. You are identified with Him by baptism.

Baptism Means Purification

The second passage on baptism in the Pauline tradition would be I Corinthians 6:11. This is also a view of baptism which can be found outside the Pauline writings and perhaps is the oldest view of all--purification. I use that term to embrace both ceremonial purification, which you would find in sectarian and proselyte baptism in Judaism, and the more moral type of purification which you would find in the teachings of John the Baptist. Now this appears later too. But, in I Corinthians 6:11, I think we would all agree that we have a very significant statement about baptism which is perhaps the most primitive of all, and that is the idea of purification. You remember that sixth chapter in which Paul has given us what is sometimes called the rogues gallery as he names ten different forms of moral perversion among the Corinthians and said, "and such were some of you" and

then said, "but you were washed." Now that seems to be the most primitive meaning of baptism: washing away uncleanness to begin with, washing away sin later on -- "but you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified, and" [watch the language] "in the name--in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Now that is the second meaning of baptism as we find it. We reach the distinctive Pauline view of baptism when we come to the concept of the body of Christ.

Baptism Means Incorporation Into the One Body of Christ

Now I do not know whether Disciples of Christ are as nervous about the one body of Christ as Baptists are, but I published a little book on Ephesians back in 1963. I read three Southern Baptist expositions of Ephesians and not one word was said about the one body of Christ in any one of the three volumes, which had been published several years apart. Now of course you know there are eight passages in Ephesians about the one body of Christ, and a man has to be rather a skilled exegete to miss all eight of them! So I bore down a little hard on it and I upset one of our veteran conservatives considerably. He came to me and said he liked a lot of things I said in this book, but he couldn't understand why I just harped on this idea of the one body of Christ. He said, after all it is found only in I Corinthians, Romans, Colossians and Ephesians. And, of course, he was exactly right -- that is only a Pauline doctrine. But all of us recognize that you can hardly take a teaching of Paul and understand it without getting involved in his doctrine. Did you ever notice this: I don't care what you're talking about. Evervthing Paul talks about comes back to this sentence, namely and very simply, that Christ not only had an earthly body between the birth and the death of Jesus, but he has an earthly body today.

Christ has an earthly body today. That's His church. That's how realistic I think Paul is speaking of the body of Christ. So when I say baptism is incorporation, I mean you come out of the body of sin and go into the body of Christ. That's Paul's view. It's an initiation rite, as Scott put it a while ago. You come out of one body, the body of sin, over into the body of Christ. And I do not think you could find a greater social concept than the concept of the body of Christ over against the body of sin. Well, with that general remark about the significance of this and so many other doctrines in Paul -- Christology, ecclesiology [check Prof. Kueng's book on ecclesiology -- you can see how important it is in that work] and on and on. Anything you want to talk about, you really get back to this concept in Pauline theology.

What Does Incorporation Mean?

Now then, what does it mean to be baptized into the body of Christ? What does it mean to be incorporated? Let's take that Latin term to make it easy to remember. Identification, Purification, Incorporation. And now we'll stay with this for the rest of the time. Well I don't know whether any of us in this room gets down to realism as much as Paul did. I don't know. I have to sort of make myself think like Paul, because I think we are so Platonic that it's very difficult for us to think like Paul, to be as Hebraic as he was. But I don't think we'll understand Paul until we adopt what I would call Hebraic realism. Now of course his teachings on baptism as incorporation in the first Corinthian letter are found in chapters 10 and 12. But I want to drop back just a little bit to this realism because I think it will help us to understand what it means to be baptized into the body. Now, body is simply Paul's word for personality. In English, we talk about "if a body needs a body." That's very close to what Paul

means by body. If a person meets a person. Your body--any body, some body--we use it in that way. Now you get the meaning of this when he's dealing with whether or not a man should be living with his father's wife. That was a problem in the church, chapter 5. In chapter 6, verse 15, he asks the question which is just like a bolt of light. "Don't you know that your bodies are members of Christ?" "Don't you know that your bodies are members of Christ?" I don't believe there is a more significant ethical statement in Paul's teachings than that question. [Of course, the answer he expects is 'yes' - I'm afraid a lot don't know it. Paul expects the answer 'yes'....most people would perhaps instinctively say 'no.' I don't know, but he said. The answer was obvious to him.] "Therefore, shall I take a member of the body of Christ and join it to a prostitute? God forbid." Now what Paul meant by that is this, that when you become a Christian, your body becomes a member of Christ's body. If that's not incorporation, what is it? Now he's not talking about baptism yet, but this helps us see, when he's dealing with the problem of immorality, what he means by this concept.

Another text which can get a lively argument started among our people is I Corinthians 7:14. Here is the problem. Here is a Christian married to a non-Christian. What they want to know is this: do my children belong to the Lord or do they not? Now this has to be understood against the Hebrew background of the household which, also, we will speak about tomorrow night--the household. Is this a pagan home or a Christian home? We don't have the concept of the solidarity of the home that the Hebrews have. We are individuals. But Paul thought about the *oikos* -- "the family," "the household," would be a good way to translate it, of course, because it includes more than father, mother and children, even slaves. There was a household. The question arose, then, when you have a mixed marriage, where one is a Christian

and one is a non-Christian. Here you begin to see what Paul means by the body when he says that the unbelieving husband is sanctified in his Christian wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified in the Christian brother. Otherwise, your children will be *akatharta*. That is, they would be unclean. But as it is, they are holy - *hagia*. Now what on earth does Paul mean by that? Well this is a very lively text. Simply put, I think it means this, that here is a woman. She belongs to the body of Christ. If she's a Christian, her body belongs to the body of Christ. But she gives her body to a man who is not a Christian, so indirectly he is brought over into the sphere of holiness simply because he is dedicated to a woman who is dedicated to God. You might call it secondary holiness, indirect holiness. She carries in her womb a baby and this baby is born of her. Her body is a member of Christ's body. Well, is this baby in Christ's body or not? Paul finds it to be in Christ's body. It will not cease to be a member of Christ's body until it alienates itself from Christ's body. Now this gets to be a very lively discussion, particularly in Germany, between Joachim Jeremias and Kurt Aland. Jeremias does some strange things right here. In the German edition he says one thing, and in the English edition of his book he says another thing. One of the advantages of translating books into other languages is you can change your mind. So Jeremias says that Paul, when he wrote I Corinthians, believed that a child was born in holiness. But when David Cairns translated it over into English for the consumption among Scotch Presbyterians, he changed his mind. Well, I think he should have left it in German. I think he's right. Paul knows that a child who is born with one parent as a member of Christ's body is in fact in Christ's body until he becomes estranged. Glad to see you shake your head because I already know you are Roman Catholic. Glad you agree with me, but this is pretty realistic isn't it? [We had lunch together today so that's the reason I know

about him.] Now here is where [and I saw a sign around here in the building somewhere that a tradition that is not worth questioning is false, or something like this] I'm going to criticize traditions.

Babies and the Problem of Sin

In early Christianity, you know, we got hung up on this point. I'll start in the Greek tradition because it's a little farther from where we are. Origen in his homilies on Leviticus, Luke and Romans, you know, said that a child was born with guilt that is worthy of damnation, even if he is only one day old. That is what he says, particularly in his commentary on Romans 5, but he also says it in his commentary on Leviticus and Luke. That's the Greek -- that's where it comes in. Origen said nothing about baptism that we can get our fingers on until he came to Caesarea. But he came to Caesarea and he found the people there baptizing infants. And he said, now we must be baptizing infants for some reason, and on the basis of a practice he worked out his theology. Remember that. That's very important -- the practice was first, the theology came second, as often happens, to justify the practice. So he coined what is later called in Latin "original sin," the doctrine of original sin, on the basis of a practice. We must have some reason for it because we baptize infants. I think all would agree that's what he said very plainly in those three commentaries. An interesting thing about it, though, was he did not become St. Origen. There was a great Greek called St. Chrysostom, and what a man he was. If you don't believe it, read Bauer's two great volumes on St. John Chrysostom. St. John Chrysostom did not agree with Origen. Antioch did not agree with Caesarea. In his baptismal instructions, which have just been recently translated into English by a Roman Catholic nun, Chrysostom says that a child is born in innocence and does not become guilty

until he commits sin himself. That's an interesting thing - the reverse. Now turn around the other side, though, and see that the Latin tradition went the other direction.

The first great Latin theologian was a man named Tertullian. Tertullian asks a very great question: Why does the age of innocence hasten to the forgiveness of sin? That's in his book *De Baptismo*. He believed that a child was born in innocence and it was not until the age of puberty that he became guilty. So he wanted to know why baptize infants since they were living in the age of innocence. That's his famous question. If you want to know the psychology behind that, his later writing on the soul will make it quite clear. The *De Anima* later on in chapters 38 and 39 worked this out very clearly. He said every child is born in the paradise of innocence and it is not until the age of puberty that he goes out into the world of sin. That's the beginning of Latin theology. This is the most valuable treatise among the church fathers on baptism because it has so much explanation and so many practices brought within a few chapters. The Latin tradition did not follow Tertullian just as the Greek tradition did not follow Origen. When the Pelagian controversy arose between Augustine and Pelagius, the British monk, Augustine began to develop his doctrine of original sin, and it was really a doctrine of original sin. He had some illustrations that will shatter a sensitive mother. For example, he tells the story of a prostitute who had twins. Somebody baptize one and it went to heaven, and they didn't baptize the other and it went to hell. Well, that would shake up a woman. He also tells the story of a pagan and a Christian being in the same room. They got their babies mixed up. They baptize the pagan baby and it went to heaven. They didn't baptize the Christian baby and it went to hell. These are not my illustrations; they're Augustine's illustrations. Now you see what I'm driv-