

# B.A.S.I.C.

*Brothers And Sisters In Christ*

## The Augsburg Confession: Article 9 Baptism

By Pastor Nathanael Mayhew

### The Sacraments

In the fifth article on the means of grace we confessed: *“To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel.”* Then, in articles seven and eight we read: *“The church is the assembly of all believers among whom the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel”* and *“the sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men.”* The stage has now been set for the following articles which will deal with the sacraments.

### Baptism

The first sacrament addressed in the Augsburg Confession is Baptism. This is a very short but succinct confession which reinforces once more the power of God’s Word in the sacraments He has instituted and given to His church. We confess: *“It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. Children, too, should be baptized, for in Baptism they are committed to*

*God and become acceptable to Him. On this account the Anabaptists who teach that infant Baptism is not right are rejected.”*

### Areas of Disagreement

- **What is the meaning or purpose of Baptism?**
- **Who should be baptized and at what age?**
- **How should the water of Baptism be applied?**

When we discuss the doctrine of Baptism with others we will find that there are three main areas of difference. The first concerns the meaning and purpose of Baptism; the second deals with whether unbaptized people need to be a certain age or attain certain knowledge before they can be baptized; and the third relates to the water of Baptism and how it should be applied to the person being baptized. Let’s take a look at each of these three differences in the light of what God tells us in His Word.

### The Meaning and Purpose of Baptism

The first concerns the meaning and purpose of

Baptism. This is related to what a person believes about the power of Baptism. Is Baptism simply *symbolic* of our salvation, or is it the power of God to save? Is Baptism the work of God, or a work of man? If Baptism is only symbolic of our salvation, and something we do as a confession of our faith in God, then Baptism is not really anything more than a powerless tradition.

But *“Baptism is necessary”* and *“grace is offered through it.”* We teach that Baptism is a “Means of Grace” and does convey spiritual blessings from God.

- Jesus speaks of the necessity of the cleansing power of Baptism: ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).***

- It is more than just a symbol or picture of what God accomplishes through other means. Through Baptism forgiveness of sins is truly given as Peter says: ***“Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).***

- Baptism is able to do this for us because it is the work of God, connected to His powerful Word. Paul writes: ***“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27).***

According to Scripture, Baptism is necessary because its purpose is to wash away our sins and give us forgiveness. Baptism is powerful and is able to forgive sins because it is connected to God’s Word.

#### Infant Baptism

The question of baptizing infants was brought to the fore by the Anabaptists at the time of Luther. They had two objections to infant Baptism. The first was their belief that infants weren’t sinful (or weren’t accountable for their sin at their young age). But compare what the Bible says about sin and accountability for it: ***“But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe” (Galatians 3:22).*** See also Genesis 8:21; Romans 3:23 and John 3:5-7.

The second objection was based on their belief that infants can’t believe. While infants and very young children may not be able to express their faith, Scripture tells us clearly that infants can believe. Jesus says, ***“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:3-6).*** See also 1 John 2:13.

But what does God tell us about who should be baptized, and at what age?

- Jesus tells His disciples to Baptize ***“all nations” (Matthew 28:19).*** The command to Baptize was not limited to any specific groups: it was not just for Jews, but all people (Acts 8:27-40); it was not just for men, but all people (Acts 16:13-15); it was not just for adults but ALL people! Peter says ***“let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38-39).***

- The apostle Paul compares Baptism in the New Testament to circumcision in the Old Testament, which was done when the baby was eight days old (Leviticus 12:3). ***“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body***

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*of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead” (Colossians 2:11-12).*

- There are also numerous examples of family baptisms recorded in Scripture (Acts 16:15; Acts 16:33; 1 Corinthians 1:16).

Note: As a result of the inspired record of Scripture concerning baptism, Church History shows that infant baptism was practiced by Christians from the very beginning.

#### **Method of Baptism**

The third question: In what way should the water of Baptism be applied? Must a person be immersed under the water, or is pouring or sprinkling water over the person sufficient?

Immersion in Baptism illustrates a beautiful picture of the new life that is given to us through Baptism: ***“Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).***

While this is a wonderful reminder, there is nothing in Scripture which dictates that a person be baptized by immersion only. And what is the meaning of the Greek words? *Baptizo* (baptize) has the general meaning of “dip, immerse, or submerge” while *baptismos* (baptism) simply means “to wash or purify by means of water.” But the idea of submerge does not fit the context every time the word “baptize” is used (cf. Luke 11:38; Mark 7:4). In the New Testament the word “baptize” simply means to wash with water - and does not always carry the idea of submersion as the method of washing.

A person may be immersed in Baptism, it is not necessary. The method itself is not the important thing; what is important is that water is applied - in any way!

This water of Baptism, connected to the Word of God and applied in any way, is a powerful life-giving and sin-destroying sacrament through which our Savior offers the forgiveness of sins to all people!

*Note: This study was prepared for the Bible Class at Zion Lutheran Church, Lawrenceville, GA by Pastor Nathanael Mayhew.*

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# Liberia

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By Pastor John Hein



In 2010 Alvin Jask from Liberia was baptized as an adult and professed his Christian faith according to what we believe and teach from the Bible here at Grace Lutheran Church in Fridley, MN. Since then others from his family originally from Liberia have also joined us. One of his nephews is now enrolled in our Christian School. Grace has been richly blessed through their fellowship!

Liberia is probably best known for Ebola because of how it took so many lives in 2014. According to health officials, this is not a current threat. However, Liberia is still consistently ranked as one of the poorest nations in the world. Not long ago civil war ravaged everything and significantly set back any national progress. There are also a number of people who are physically impaired due to the violence of the war, some missing limbs and without eyesight, others with deformities due to medical inattention. Healthcare is neither readily available nor affordable to many Liberians. On YouTube is a very good documentary that describes the current situation. Search

“LIBERIA: Emerging from the Shadows?” (<https://youtu.be/hEIODdX2TIE>).

Even though Liberia has had various setbacks to its progress (e.g., Ebola), the people there have a fervent yearning to rebuild. Because of this, Liberia’s current president, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf whom Alvin knows personally, has a number of governmental initiatives in place to rebuild the economy through improvement of roads, infrastructure, healthcare, etc. Alvin has a personal desire to contribute to this process, having an obvious love for his homeland. Having seen and experienced many of the blessings of living in the United States, he wants to take what he has learned to help his people.

But more importantly, Alvin has a stronger desire to share the Good News of salvation found through our Savior, Jesus Christ. It often seems that the Lord’s hand is at work when nations have experienced such lows. This pattern was often repeated with God’s people throughout Biblical times. During the period of the Judges there was an oft-repeated cycle of repentance after they had experienced devastation. Could this same cycle be part of what is happening in Liberia? One thing we do know, the Gospel always has the power to heal!

From the time he began instruction at Grace and learned about his Savior, Alvin has been committed and excited to share the Gospel in his home country. He has spent a significant amount of his own money to construct a building in order to start a Christian Day School a few miles northeast of Monrovia, the capital city of Liberia. He is now also planning on the construction of a church building nearby. This area is located along the Mon-

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rovia-Kakata Highway, a major road which has been recently upgraded. Alvin also has another building in a remote area near Bopolu, about 65 miles north of Monrovia, even though his goal for this to be a Christian Day School has recently been put on hold. This is because the intended teacher, his niece, died of tuberculosis.

For a few years now, Alvin has been making regular trips between Liberia and the United States in order to manage construction and the development of various projects at the compound near Monrovia. He traveled there this July (2015) and intends to stay until January of 2016. These efforts are intended to help his people and to support the ministry of the Word. He has started a well to supply filtered water (something rare there) and to have a laundromat and latrine. Some may already know that Alvin is legally blind. He is taking the tools he has learned in America to also provide training and technological advantages for the sight-impaired, currently with 12 students. Recently Alvin stated that this far exceeds his original expectations. In addition, he is using his IT management training to provide an internet café. The location for this is quite clever as the University of Liberia – Fendell Campus is a few blocks away. Students there currently do not have internet access, so its availability will be a local draw. This campus was recently constructed in 2010, so the area is also developing with some newer construction.

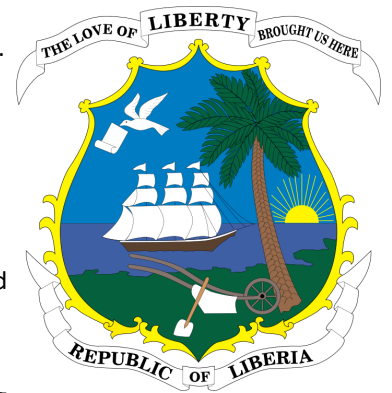
For the past few years, Alvin and Pastor have been sharing ideas as to how to proceed in Liberia. The CLC Board of Missions has also been informed of Alvin's efforts. The key is to have people in place who believe and teach the Bible as we do. Therefore Alvin has been reaching out to many people he knows, especially since he has many contacts through his former job as the spokesman for the Liberia

National Police. He now has 25 contacts who are eager for Biblical instruction, including five pastors and a few people who are interested in helping

him staff his Christian Day School. Because of this, plans have been in the works to provide face-to-face Biblical training and also investigate whether there could be doctrinal agreement with the pastors.

As reported to the Voters and the Council, Pastor Hein has been making plans for a trip to Liberia. The Elders at Grace have been consulted and are allowing Pastor Hein to proceed as long as Grace is not financially responsible for the trip. Pastor Daniel Fleischer, retired pastor at Grace, is willing to help with the pastoral responsibilities while Pastor Hein would be away. The CLC Board of Missions also desires to help in this effort by sending retired missionary, Pastor David Koenig, to Liberia as well. Things are now quickly unfolding for this effort to materialize. Recently an itinerary was scheduled from November 2nd through November 14th.

Pastor Hein plans to fly out of Minneapolis on November 2nd, travel through Newark, NJ, and Brussels, Belgium, in order to reach Monrovia. Pastor Hein would do some preliminary contact work until Missionary Koenig arrives on November 8th. During that time, Pastor Hein would meet some of the people who are interested in our Biblical training. He will also meet some of the family of our members here at Grace, including the mother of Rachele Kanneh who has been ill for a number of months. Pastor Hein is also trying to arrange for a few worship services to which others





would be invited, including a service on Liberia's national Thanksgiving Day modeled after our own in the United States. Liberia's is on the first Thursday of November.

After this initial phase of the trip, Missionary Koenig would arrive on the evening of November 8th, the evening after Pastor Hein would hold a Sunday worship service. A three-day, all-day, Bible Seminar sponsored by the CLC Board of Missions would then be held from November 9th through 11th. This would be held at the compound which Alvin has built so that the people would get the connection to his effort there. Following this seminar, Pastor Hein and Missionary Koenig would then meet for more in-depth conversations with the pastors and with those interested in staffing the Christian Day School.

Here is a general summary proposed for the trip:

Mon., Nov. 2 – Pastor flies from Minneapolis to Newark to Brussels

Tue., Nov. 3 – Pastor flies from Brussels and arrives at Monrovia

Wed., Nov. 4 – Visit people and Alvin's compound to learn about the school

Thu., Nov. 5 – Thanksgiving worship service and visits

Fri., Nov. 6 – Visit people and prepare for Bible seminar

Sat., Nov. 7 – Visit people and prepare for Bible seminar

Sun., Nov. 8 – Sunday Bible Class and worship service (Koenig arrives)

Mon., Nov. 9 – Bible Seminar

Tue., Nov. 10 – Bible Seminar

Wed., Nov. 11 – Bible Seminar

Thu., Nov. 12 – Meeting with pastors and Christian Day School staff

Fri., Nov. 13 – Possible worship service, conclude visits and depart Liberia

As noted, the CLC Board of Missions is sponsoring Missionary Koenig and the seminar. Pastor Hein is responsible for his own travel, albeit some sponsorship is being provided apart from the congregation and the CLC. It is hoped that this trip can provide Alvin much encouragement in his effort to reach out with God's treasured Word. It is also hoped that following firsthand observations of the situation there by Pastor Hein and Missionary Koenig, Alvin can be provided with some helpful guidance. After reporting these observations to the CLC Board of Missions, future involvement by our church body can be determined.

Please pray that the Lord will richly bless the efforts of this trip to Liberia! To share the Gospel is the most important work with which we can all be involved.

Romans 10:14-18: 14 How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" 16 But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" 17 So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. 18 But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: "Their sound has gone out to all the earth, And their words to the ends of the world."

Written by Pastor John Hein, 10/2015