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Baptism as a Participatory Sign: The Ecumenical Potential of the Sacramental Turn in Baptismal Theology

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been a sacramental turn in traditions that have conventionally adhered to a more symbolic understanding of baptism (e.g., “Baptist Sacramentalism”). Developments in the understanding of baptism have also taken place in ecumenical processes and traditions with a stronger sacramental understanding, such as the Lutheran tradition. A key to understanding this development is a renewed conceptualization of baptism as a *sign*. As a sign, baptism conveys salvation in an anticipatory way. As such, it is a sign of what is yet to come in the life of the baptized and in eschatological fulfillment. This also means that baptism should be understood both as an event and as a process. This paper argues that a more comprehensive understanding of baptism as a sacramental sign might enrich our understanding of baptism in various traditions and facilitate mutual ecumenical understanding and learning.