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In order to grasp the quintessence of the book, its title – Baptism and the unity of the church – should actually be turned around: *The unity of the church and baptism*. The subtext, according to the title, is therefore *in effect* the main text. Baptism should serve as the vehicle to achieve and promote this goal of the unity of the church. The scholar, therefore, who wants to delve into the whole problem of the different issues at stake in baptism will perhaps be disappointed. But the one who is interested in a current debate of the ecumenical movement will be richly rewarded. The book wants to investigate the possibility of looking at the other (read: neglected) sacrament in pursuing the ideal of visible church unity. Most Christian churches teach that baptism is a sacrament of salvation as well as a sacrament of initiation into the Christian community. It is therefore strange that it doesn't play a bigger role in the ecumenical debate of our day. The book follows the line of reasoning that this possibility is indeed viable. Perhaps it can achieve what the Eucharist hitherto has failed to bring about: real *koinonia*.

The book is the result of a study that was requested by the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and begun by the Institute for Ecumenical Research in Strassbourg. A consultation [sic] followed in 1996 in Hvittorp (Finland). A consensus was established among the participants that unity in baptism transcends all divisions. Unity is more eminent than differences and this is rooted in the one baptism (Eph 4:5). Emphasis should thus be laid on the indicative nature of unity and not solely on its imperative. We are thus all members of the one church and this definitely has implications for the existence of different churches. But this demands more research, according to the Hvittorp discussions.

In a well-balanced and rather traditional Lutheran manner, the Study Paper argues that albeit baptism is the fundamental bond of communion in the church, it is neither the only nor the final bond. Our baptismal unity should move us to ecumenical engagement of full altar or pulpit fellowship and full communion. And this unity is not something that should be achieved, but we are called to live and rejoice in it. It is perhaps necessary to highlight two aspects here. Does baptism according to the Lutheran tradition really make someone a member of the church? Although Lutherans have not understood confirmation as a sacramental addition to baptism, the baptised are withheld from the Eucharist until such a moment where they are confirmed by the church. This practice is perhaps an obstacle to overcome in this debate. Susan Wood's proposal of an "integrated rite of initiation" which would reconnect baptism with the Eucharist is worth mentioning. The ecclesial meaning of the Eucharist has largely been neglected in the past, which will be retrieved in this reciprocally interpreted integration of baptism and Eucharist. This makes this "integrated rite of initiation" necessary. Secondly, the whole issue of the charismatic movement's "baptism of the Holy Spirit" (second blessing) raises a problem as well. Neither have the merely baptised a birthright to the Eucharist nor are they second-class church members. This, of course, asks for biblical,

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ecumenical and liturgical perspectives. In this regard, an article by James Dunn really deserves special attention. He contributes to the debate by indicating how illegitimate totality transfer of meaning concerning the word baptism exists. He argues that the New Testament perhaps sees the essence of baptism in the outpouring of the Spirit, sometimes even distinct from baptism with water. He pleads for an understanding of a Spiritualized interpretation of the baptism by Paul as well. It is the gift of the Spirit, not baptism, which provides the new covenant's answer to the old covenant's circumcision. We have to be careful not to impose rich sacramental theology upon texts that speak only of the water rite. What is in any case clear, is that this whole debate of church unity cannot be sufficient should the focus be on baptism alone. The interrelation with the Eucharist even leads to a scrutiny of the different interpretations in ecclesiology. This will help one to come to grips with the debate of the local and universal church, visible and invisible unity, the assembly of saints and the indicative and imperative of this enterprise. The book is well-written, with no typing errors and, in accordance with the requirements for a good book, it prompts you to think. It definitely contributes to the (relatively sterile) debate in South Africa among certain churches in their endeavour to obtain one church denomination.
