For Further Reading:  
A Supplemental Bibliography on Baptism

The following list was prepared as a supplement to the brief bibliography provided in the CTCR’s 2018 report An Inexpressible Treasure: The Theology and Practice of Holy Baptism. [lcms.org/ctcr-report-the-theology-and-practice-of-holy-baptism] It suggests various resources for those who wish to do further reading about the doctrine of Baptism. Although not an exhaustive list, the descriptive annotations may be helpful.

I. Scholarly Works


Martin Chemnitz found it important to respond to the canons of the Council of Trent, which were drawn up by the Roman Catholic theologians to refute the theology and writings of Martin Luther. Regarding Baptism, Trent’s canons often strike back at Luther’s Babylonian Captivity of the Church. Chemnitz counters and responds to these objections with a thorough defense of the Lutheran position.


This is part of the “Studies in Biblical Theology” series. Cullmann does thorough exegetical work in his examination of the Greek New Testament texts. He also discusses allusions to Baptism in the Old Testament and examines not only the Hebrew text but also the Syriac and Septuagint versions as well as the Targums. He also demonstrates awareness of both ancient and modern exegetical treatments by prominent authorities.


This book by a significant figure in Lutheran orthodoxy addresses a wide variety questions regarding Baptism and provides many Scripture passages in connection with his answers.


This 20th century Norwegian Lutheran professor presents thorough support for infant baptism. He writes in his historical context, which includes pietism and an established “state church” culture with its attendant problems, e.g., many Christians who had later experiences of revival of faith.

Jenson closely examines Greek grammar and syntax in his treatment on Baptism as it is presented in the New Testament. His section on Baptism in Church History is interesting but sometimes rather provocative and controversial. He argues forcefully for infant communion.


Jeremias examines the patristic writings and archaeological evidence (especially the inscriptive evidence) from the early church period to determine the understanding and practice of the early church regarding the baptism of children.


This is a response to Kurt Aland’s book, *Did the Early Church Baptize Infants?* (Aland attempted to refute the thesis of Jeremias’ first book, *Infant Baptism in the First Four Centuries*). Jeremias offers a capable response to Aland’s objections.


This is a presentation on Baptism in a major and recent two-volume Lutheran reference work in systematic theology.


In his treatment of Baptism, Krauth focuses on the teaching of the Lutheran Confessions. He argues and repeatedly emphasizes that “Luther was no immersionist.” He also deals with New Testament teaching about Baptism and carefully defends the Lutheran view. He makes frequent use of quotations by prominent 15th and 17th century Lutheran theologians. His section dealing with baptismal regeneration and infant baptism is especially helpful; in this context, he also discusses the Roman Catholic understanding of “Limbo.”


This essay sets forth Luther’s “early” view of baptism, from a crucial writing. This should not be regarded as Luther’s fully articulated, mature understanding.

This book starts with a narrative of two scenes dealing with Baptism, the first reflecting an account from the apostolic tradition of Hippolytus, the second a typical 20th century Protestant baptism. Marty also deals with the Gospel narratives regarding Baptism. He emphasizes the significance of the element of water in a way that is unique in comparison to most discussions of Baptism. He follows and expands upon the explanation of Baptism in *Luther’s Small Catechism*.


Robert Kolb capably presents the Scriptural and Lutheran position regarding Baptism and offers critiques of the views of Baptism by Baptist, Reformed and Church of Christ proponents.


Peters’ commentaries on the chief parts of Luther’s catechisms are highly regarded and worthwhile.


The material is presented in an intriguing way. The book presents a dialog between the characters Martin Childfont and John Bapstead. The format allows the presentation of very helpful theological information in a creative and memorable way. The book has been reprinted in The Concordia Heritage Series and also by Wipf & Stock (2003).

Scaer, David P. *Baptism*. St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 1999.

This book is part of the “Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics” Series. Scaer highlights several key theological themes. First is the maxim: “All Theology is Christology.” This volume never loses sight of Christ as central to the meaning, purpose and power of Baptism. A second theme is sola Scriptura. Scaer demonstrates his own commitment to this theme in basing his teaching on Baptism on a solid, scholarly exegetical examination of the Greek New Testament. Scaer demonstrates that he has read and processed the thoughts and approaches of many notable systematic theologians through the centuries, and reflects this discernment throughout the book. Scaer has made Baptism a special area of personal research and study; therefore, this book reflects the fruit of a long career of special attention to the subject matter.

In this book Scaer addresses the rationalism that infected German Lutheran theologians of the nineteenth century and threatened the Lutheran Church with the loss of New Testament teachings that Luther’s writings set forth so clearly. Scaer sets forth the theocentric nature of Baptism as a sacrament in which God in His grace is the main actor, over and against the tendency to approach Baptism anthropocentrically in which it is reduced to a mere church ordinance.


In this work, Scaer tackles the subject of infant Baptism in a roundtable discussion with four other scholars from differing theological traditions. His remarks reflect original thinking grounded in a historical Lutheran and Christocentric framework. He emphasizes that the Holy Spirit works faith in infants and children through Baptism. He takes on difficult subjects that are often ignored, such as questions about individuals from Christian families who die before they have been baptized.


This has long been recognized as a classic and foundational systematic treatment of Baptism by a notable German scholar. It has been translated, published and utilized in the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod for many years.


This book by an Anglican scholar is an amended version of his doctoral thesis submitted to the University of Durham in 1991. The book is very expensive, but well worth reading. It examines the mature Luther’s thoughts about Baptism as they appear (perhaps surprisingly) in his extensive lectures on Genesis.

**II. Shorter Scholarly Journal Articles or chapters**


Althaus deals with the indelible character of Baptism, Luther’s developing understanding of the faith of infants, and the relationship between faith, reason and Baptism. He also compares the emphases of Paul and Luther concerning Baptism.

This article refutes the idea that the Greek word *baptizo* must mean immersion and that immersion was the standard practice of biblical times and in the early church. It makes use of a careful study of the term *baptizo* as it is used in the Septuagint. It maintains that the mode of the application of water in Baptism is an adiaphoron.


This is a treatment of developments in Luther’s understanding of the Bible’s teaching regarding Baptism. Barth’s discussion and defense of infant Baptism is thorough.


Bayer discusses Luther’s early view of the connection between Baptism and faith as it is found in Luther’s *Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. Luther later moved beyond this view (as explained in the article by Hoffman cited below). Bayer does not deal with the more developed theology of Luther in his later years.


Chemnitz was a primary drafter of the Formula of Concord. It has been said that if it were not for the second Martin (Chemnitz) the work of the first Martin (Luther) would have not survived. Essential reading for Lutheran pastors and theologians.


The majority of the Bible’s information and instruction about Baptism is found in the Gospels and Acts. Here Deterding carefully presents the material on Baptism contained in the Pauline Epistles.


Elert examines Luther’s teaching regarding Baptism and reflects upon the insights the Reformer sets forth in his writings.

This is a carefully crafted essay that critiques a number of other Lutheran theologians (including Melanchthon and Gerhard) who have written about Baptism.


In this essay, an LCMS New Testament scholar provides helpful and incisive exegetical insights regarding Baptism.


This is a nine-page essay that shares some of Luther’s insights regarding Scripture’s teaching about Baptism. Gunderman notes that some of Luther’s greatest insights into Baptism are seemingly off-hand comments contained in his commentaries and sermons. He shows how Luther emphasizes that God is the One who acts in Baptism from start to finish. The significance of the relationship between circumcision and Baptism is also a special emphasis in this essay.


This has been the standard textbook of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod [WELS] for generations of seminarians, written by a prominent WELS systematic theologian.


Hoffman argues that Luther was convinced that Jesus’ institution of Baptism served as the foundation for the consistent practice of the church to baptize infants from its earliest days. He works through the implications of this practice on the basis of the principle *sola fide*, which he finds to be essential to the theology of Baptism.

A prominent ELCA theologian discusses Baptism in this systematic theology reference work. Readers will likely find some of his conclusions expected and others unexpected, especially with regard to the practice of infant Baptism.


Koehler considers Christian baptism in the context of its historical precedents. He examines the teachings of Maimonides and the Talmud regarding baptisms among the Jews before the time of Christ. He also examines the understanding of Baptism among the early church fathers. (He credits many of his insights to W. Wall’s History of Infant Baptism.)


This article focuses on the meaning of the Greek preposition eis in Matthew 28:19. It quotes a number of German works pertinent to the discussion.


In this essay, Kolb contends: “The apostolic concept of baptism influenced the whole of Luther’s theology much more than simply in its treatment of the Sacrament as one rite and form which conveys the power of God.” Dr. Kolb sees significant aspects of Luther’s understanding of Baptism as having developed earlier than is acknowledged by many other Luther scholars (e.g., Trigg). He concludes: “Whether Luther’s doctrine of justification is indeed predicated upon Paul’s understanding of Baptism or not, the two are intimately connected in the Reformer’s mature thought.”


Krispin argues that Luther arrived at his theology of Baptism in a progressive fashion. He asserts that Luther did not arrive at a Gospel-oriented view of Baptism until after 1520.


This important essay by Luther is summarized, analyzed and critiqued by Jaroslav Pelikan in his article in Luther for an Ecumenical Age, edited by Carl S. Meyer (see below).

This article carefully examines specific uses of the word BAΙΤΙΖΩ and its cognates in classical Greek usage, in the Septuagint, in the Greek New Testament and in extra-biblical Greek works (e.g., the Didache).


In this article reprinted from other sources, Meyer provides a good general overview of Baptism. He deals with infant Baptism and the value of Baptism throughout the life of a Christian.


This is a presentation by a longtime professor of systematic theology at Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) in a former era. Particularly helpful information is found in his lengthy footnotes.


This professor of systematic theology from Concordia Seminary (St. Louis) looks at Baptism in its worship setting and traces various practices in the history of the church. He examines how the rite of Baptism is treated and formulated in the hymnal Lutheran Worship.


Over and against a modern revival of Gnostic tendencies in much of contemporary theology, Dr. Nagel explores the wonder of God’s promise in the waters of Baptism. He emphasizes that Christians should cherish the means that God has instituted for our salvation.


Pelikan, who was a prominent expert in Reformation era history and theology at Yale Divinity school, summarizes and highlights various aspects of Luther’s 1528 essay, “Concerning Rebaptism.”

This served as a standard textbook for generations of LCMS seminarians by one of the finest systematic theologians in the history of the Missouri Synod.


Piepkorn, who was a professor at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, summarizes and systematizes the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions regarding Baptism. (His essay contains quite a bit of untranslated Latin and a small amount of transliterated Greek.)


In this essay, Sasse responds to Karl Barth and the baptismal theology of the Reformed churches.


Sasse emphasizes that Baptism is a means of grace in which God is the primary actor. He has a brief but rather comprehensive survey of the patristic evidence for infant baptism. He does thorough work on Christ’s command to baptize and the scriptural promises attached to Baptism. He defends the view that Titus 3:5 and other passages teach Baptismal regeneration. He distinguishes between the Lutheran, Roman Catholic and Reformed understandings of Baptism.


Scaer emphasizes and defends the supreme importance of the sacraments for the church. They are not merely nice “extras” but were given by God as absolutely vital to the life of the church.


Scaer emphasizes the significance of Baptism as the *work of God*: people are saved by God’s initiative, not their own. They are saved by God through the Person and work of
Jesus Christ, who is the center and starting point of any real, Spirit empowered, theological understanding of Baptism.

Scaer, David P. *Life, New Life and Baptism*. Fort Wayne: Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 198-?.

This is another worthwhile study from the LCMS seminary professor.


Scaer contends that Luther’s understanding of Baptism was at the heart of his theology. “Baptism required faith for justification, but baptism and not faith provided the certainty of salvation.”


This article does not focus on the sacrament of Baptism as such, but instead discusses the appropriateness and significance of elements of liturgy that often accompany the sacrament of Baptism, such as exorcism, the questioning of sponsors who speak on behalf of children, the wearing of special white garments, the use of a baptismal candle, etc.


This work gleans the most helpful presentations of Lutheran doctrine from some of the notable German Lutheran theologians of the 16th and 17th centuries and translates them into English. The section on Baptism addresses various issues, such as the relationship of the sacrament of Baptism to Penance and the Lord’s Supper. It also addresses questions such as the efficacy of Baptism by and/or of a hypocrite.


Walther is arguably the most significant theological leader in the history of the LCMS. As always, he combines the mind of a gifted theologian with the heart of a caring pastor as he treats the doctrine and practice of Baptism.


This is a thorough study of the translated writings of Luther in the American Edition of Luther’s Works available at the time of the publication of the article. Zietlow finds,
examines and classifies seventeen arguments used to support infant Baptism by the reformer.

### III. Popular Works


The author’s book is subtitled “The Doctrine of Infant Baptism for Today.” He is a Pauline scholar who also authored the Concordia commentary on Galatians.


The author served as a parish pastor, a seminary professor and as the executive director of the CTCR of the LCMS in its early days. He examines the role of water in the Bible, in nature and in Baptism. He reviews the antecedents to Christian Baptism. Jewish practice (e.g. the ritual baths of Qumran), the baptism of John the Baptizer and the baptism of Jesus by John. He discusses past, present and future as it relates to Baptism, and how the theme of death and resurrection is central to the theology of Baptism.


This book brings together Luther’s significant sermons on Baptism, some of which have here been translated into English for the first time here in a published work.

### IV. Shorter Popular Treatments


Chemnitz addresses various topics related to Baptism in question and answer format. A very accessible resource.


This is an essay by a former faculty member of Concordia Seminary which was originally presented at the United Methodist–Lutheran Dialog in Dayton, Ohio in December 1977. It emphasizes that the Lutheran position on Baptism is drawn from the Lutheran Confessions.

Girgensohn seeks to assist those who instruct people in the six chief parts of Luther’s Small Catechism, including Baptism.


This doctrinal reference work has short presentations of doctrinal truths and identifies the Bible passages that support each part of the statements. It was reprinted for the *Concordia Heritage Series*.


This doctrinal textbook was used for many years at LCMS colleges and universities. It includes a sound presentation of the Lutheran understanding of Baptism.


This is a classic work that was reprinted in the *Concordia Heritage Series*.


Kretzmann’s popular commentary on the Scriptures was frequently used and valued by Lutheran laity.


As the title implies, this book sets forth basic truths about Baptism that every LCMS Christian should learn and know.


As Luther faced various controversies during the Reformation Era with the Roman Catholics and Anabaptists, he was forced to reexamine the Scriptures and increasingly refine his presentation of the biblical teaching about this sacrament. Lohse guides his readers through Luther’s discoveries.
Luther, Martin. “Concerning Baptism,” in *The Large Catechism* [available in a number of translations, e.g., *The Book of Concord*. Edited by Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.]

This is a foundational and essential exposition by Luther of Scripture’s teaching regarding Holy Baptism.


This is a writing on Baptism from early in the Reformer’s career.


This relatively recent textbook of doctrine is primarily the work of several Concordia University religion professors.

Pless, John T. “Baptism as Consolation in Luther’s Pastoral Care.” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 67, no. 1 (January 2003): 19-32.

Pless combines good scholarship with helpful wisdom in matters of practical pastoral care.


The title of the article summarizes its content well.


Rossow has served as a Concordia University Irvine faculty member and a parish pastor. He first traces the use of “baptism” in Judaism before the ministry of John the Baptist. He covers the major aspects of the doctrine of Baptism and cites the pertinent Bible passages to make his points. He quotes authoritative documents from other Christian groups regarding their stands on issues in regard to baptism and concludes with citations from the Lutheran Confessions regarding Baptism.


Teigen was president of Bethany College in Mankato, Minnesota, when he contributed this essay at a Lutheran Free Conference in Davenport, Iowa in the summer of 1969. He
demonstrates an excellent grasp of Luther’s writings on Baptism. He is also very aware of LCMS literature on the subject.


Wollenburg (who was a long time LCMS District President in Montana) emphasizes the indelible character of Baptism and the implications of the theology of Baptism for proper catechesis and care for the baptized.