

The “clothe” metaphor in Paul and the entity taking the active role in baptism

ABSTRACT

The “clothe” metaphor in Paul contributes to the understanding of the entity taking the active role in baptism. Within the infant baptism tradition, it is understood to be God who is the active participant in baptism, while in the believer’s baptismal tradition, human beings respond in obedience. The “clothe” metaphor in the Pauline and disputed Pauline material is applied in connection with baptism, ethical exhortation that is associated with baptism, or within an eschatological context in which the language continues with the baptismal imagery. The metaphor occurs mostly as a direct, reflexive middle, which points to the participation of the entity in the action. The entity thus acts in relation to himself or herself. This nature of the middle voice corresponds to the way in which the metaphor is used in the Pauline and disputed Pauline material, and indicates the conscious participation of the baptismal candidate in baptism. This interpretation argues for understanding baptism in Paul as believer’s baptism, which in turn poses certain questions for those who believe in the infant baptismal tradition.

1. INTRODUCTION

Baptism has always been a controversial topic in the church, especially in connection with the traditions of infant and believer’s baptism. Thiselton (2007:512-513) refers to one of the classic debates between Joachim Jeremias and Kurt Aland (1960-1962) during which Jeremias produced a study in which he examined the background of proselyte baptism and the οἶκος formula of household baptisms, including Lydia (Acts 16:15), the jailer of Philippi (Acts 16:31-33) and Stephanus (1 Cor 1:16; 16:15). Apart from describing other New Testament passages, Jeremias examined the development of baptism and infant baptism up to the end of the third century. Aland responded by contending that the “households” did not necessarily include children, but rather slaves and other adults. He argued that an age restriction was imposed on baptism in the early church and that infant baptism was not introduced before around 200-203 CE. Thiselton (2007:513) states:

Appeals to historical sources and to exegesis might appear to be inconclusive, since both sides tend to use the same data to argue their case. The real issue is a deeper one. It is *hermeneutical*, for, as Jeremias declares, the debate ultimately turns on *two different understandings of baptism*.

One of the specific areas that have an influence on the understanding of baptism, especially with reference to infant and believer’s baptism, is the perception of who is the person who is the *active* participant in the act of baptism. Within the infant baptismal tradition, baptism is mostly understood as an event where God is the person who acts (e.g., Ridderbos 1966:411, 444, 459-460; cf. Versteeg 1983:93-94), whereas in the believer’s baptismal tradition, baptism is mostly understood as a human response of obedience (e.g., Beasley-Murray [1962] 1972:266-

275; cf. Barth 1969). The latter comparison largely corresponds to a perception of infant baptism in terms of an objective or indicative character, and believer's baptism in terms of a subjective and imperative character. I will argue in this article that the "clothe" metaphor in the Pauline corpus, including the disputed letters of Ephesians and Colossians, contributes to an understanding of baptism as a theological imperative, where the baptismal candidate consciously participates in baptism. In doing so, my intention is not to cover the whole discussion on baptism or to reach a final conclusion on the subject, but to contribute to future discussion on the matter by taking believer's baptism, with a specific focus on the person taking the active role in baptism, as a point of departure. Although it could be argued that infant baptism was a later development within the early church (e.g., Ferguson 2009:378-379, 857) and that applying the "clothe" metaphor in Paul to the question concerning believer's or infant baptism is strictly anachronistic, the particular meaning of baptism in Paul (as portrayed by the "clothe" metaphor) should be brought into line with the theology behind infant baptism, if infant baptism is considered as a form of baptism that is based on the New Testament. In other words, the presupposition of this article is that Paul's theological thought on baptism is considered as normative with respect to justifying the doctrine of infant baptism.

Based on the semantic domains of "activities involving clothing and adorning" in Louw and Nida (49 in Vol. 1 1988:525-528), the main terms that denote the use of this metaphor throughout the Pauline corpus, including the disputed letters of Ephesians and Colossians, can be identified within the following 25 occurrences: ἐνδύω (1 Thess 5:8; Gal 3:27; 1 Cor 15:53 [X2],54 [X2]; 2 Cor 5:3;¹ Rom 13:12,14; Col 3:10,12; Eph 4:24; 6:11,14), ἐκδύω (2 Cor 5:4), ἀποτίθημι (Rom 13:12; Col 3:8; Eph 4:22,25), ἀπεκδύομαι (Col 2:15; 3:9), ἀπέκδυσις (Col 2:11), επενδύω (2 Cor 5:2,4) and υποδέομαι (Eph 6:15). As can be seen from this data, some of the cognate terms occur together. When the data are combined together, nine passages emerge: 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Galatians 3:27, 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, 2 Corinthians 5:3-4, Romans 13:12-14, Colossians 2:11-15, Colossians 3:8-12, Ephesians 4:22-25 and Ephesians 6:11-15.

It is impossible to fully exegete all nine passages within the scope of this article. My approach will be (1) to describe grammatically the nature of the action within the "clothe" metaphor, (2) to determine the metaphor's relation to water baptism in (a) church history (briefly) and (b) in each of the nine identified passages, and (3) to describe theologically the character of the metaphor in each passage, focusing especially on the subject of the action(s) and the measure of human participation in the action(s). In the latter two methodological steps (2b and 3), the passages will be addressed in approximate order of relevance to these methodological aims for the undisputed and disputed letters respectively. The implications of the enquiry will lastly be applied to the understanding of the person taking the active role in the act of baptism, and its implications for the discussion on infant and believer's baptism.

2. THE PROMINENCE OF THE MIDDLE VOICE IN THE CLOTHING METAPHOR

Apart from ἀπεκδύσει in Colossians 2:11 which occurs within an adverbial phrase, the rest of the terms are verbs (24 of them). Of these 24 verbs, two occur as a deponent middle voice

¹ Although the Nestle-Aland (27th ed) text (Aland et al 1993) reads ἐκδυσάμενοι, the 25th edition had ενδυσσμενοι. The reading in the 27th edition (εκδυσσμενοι) is based on D*.c ar fc; Mcion Tert Spec. The reading ἐνδυσσμενοι is based on P46 κ B C D2 Ψ 0243. 33. 1739. 1881 M lat sy co; Cl. Metzger (1971:579) is probably correct that ενδυσσμενοι should be retained for its superior external support, despite its supposed banality and tautology (so with most commentators, e.g., Harris 2005:368; Furnish 1984:268; Barrett [1973] 1976:149).

(ἀπεκδυσάμενος, Col 2:15; ἀπεκδυσάμενοι, Col 3:9) whereas the remaining 22 each occur as a direct reflexive middle voice (Wallace 1996:416). Wallace (1996:416) states that “the direct middle is quite rare, used almost exclusively with certain verbs whose lexical nuance included a *reflexive notion* (such as *putting on clothes*)” (emphasis added). The sentence ὁ Ἡρώδης ἐνδυσάμενος ἐσθήτα βασιλικὴν (Acts 12:21) can thus be translated as “Herod *clothed himself* with royal clothing” (Wallace 1996:417, emphasis original). The middle voice in general signifies the “subject’s participation” (Wallace 1996:414) in the action. The middle voice “calls special attention to the subject” and signifies the subject as “acting in relation to himself [or herself] somehow” (Robertson 1914:804, adopted by Wallace 1996:415; cf. Zerwick & Grosvenor 1988:xxiii; Van Rensburg 1953:101).

3. THE “CLOTHE” METAPHOR AND BAPTISM

One of the areas in which the close relationship between the clothing metaphor and baptism can be seen is in the practice of baptism in the early church. George (1994:280-281) discusses several elements from the late second century that accompanied an elaborate baptismal process where the baptismal candidates divested themselves of clothes prior to baptism: catechesis, fasting and prayer, renunciation, credo, disrobing (removal of clothes),² immersion, investment in a new white robe, symbolising the “putting on” of Christ in a newness of life (cf. Gal 3:27), anointing, the laying on of hands and the Lord’s Supper.³ These elements formed part of an understanding of baptism where it involved a transition from an old way of life to a new way (George 1994:281). Yet the “clothe” metaphor’s connection with baptism can be demonstrated exegetically.⁴

3.1 The undisputed letters

Within the undisputed letters, the relationship between the clothing metaphor and baptism is most evident in Galatians 3:27, where the clothing with Christ is identified with baptism. While most understand baptism here as referring to water baptism (e.g., Hays 2000:271-272; George 1994; Longenecker 1990:155; Fung 1988:173), Dunn (1993:203-204) argues for understanding εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε as a metaphor that is borrowed from baptism (cf. Witherington III 1998:276). Ferguson (2009:148), however, shows that although the verb βαπτίζω may on occasion be used metaphorically, the context normally gives an indication of such use. Without such an indication, the rite of water baptism should be assumed (cf. Fung 1988:173; Oepke 1968:539-540). Baudry (2001:5) therefore refers to baptism “in water” as a pleonasm.

The next passage that probably alludes to water baptism is Romans 13:12-14. Many see a direct correlation with the baptismal imagery of Galatians 3:27 (e.g., Wright 2002:729; Schreiner [1998] 2005:700-701; Moo 1996:825; Bruce [1985] 2000:243; Cranfield 1979:688; Barrett [1962] 1975:254; Ridderbos 1959:301). Apart from the close similarity in terminology between Romans 13:14 (ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν) and Galatians 3:27

2 It is not certain whether participants in baptism were naked or semi-naked (Ferguson 2009:855). Collins (2008:101) argues that they were semi-naked, but Ferguson (2009:477) argues that it is likely that they were naked, although the room was probably dark and men and women were separate.

3 George (1994:280-281) conflated these elements from several baptismal traditions (e.g., Tertullian, *De Baptismo*; Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition*; Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*; Chrysostom, *Baptismal Homilies*; cf. Hinson 1981:73; Whitaker 1960).

4 See Du Toit (2011) for a more elaborate exegetical motivation of the relationship between the “clothe” metaphor and baptism.

(Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε), the motive of renewal in Romans 13:12-14 alludes to 12:1 where Paul calls his readers to the renewal of their mind (Moo 1996:826). Rom 12:1 in turn is probably a reminder of what happened at baptism. With reference to Romans 12:1, Peterson (1993:177) writes: "The initial presentation of ourselves to God in Christ, made at conversion/baptism, needs to be renewed on a regular basis." Cranfield (1979:685) writes that the frequency with which ἀποτίθεσθαι and ἐνδύεσθαι occur in passages of moral teaching in the New Testament suggests the possibility that their use was a feature of primitive catechetical material.

Although the language of 2 Corinthians 5:3-4 is eschatological, Furnish (1984:297-298) argues that the language in these verses is doubtlessly influenced by the language of early Christian baptismal liturgy, especially Galatians 3:27 (cf. Pop [1953] 1962:144). The clothing (ἐνδυσάμενοι, v. 3) would then point to the transformation in a person's earthly existence and not a future, metaphysical transformation, while the sighing and desire to be further clothed (v. 4) would refer to the completion of salvation that has been a reality at baptism (Furnish 1984:296; cf. Lang 1973:187-188; Hanhart 1969:455).⁵

In terms of 1 Thessalonians 5:8, Collins (2008:220) argues for the presence of baptismal language. Apart from the term ἐνδύω which corresponds with Romans 13:12,14, there is correspondence in terms of sleeping (ὑπνους in Rom 13:11; καθεύδωμεν in 1 Thess 5:6,7), armour (ὅπλα in Rom 13:12; θώρακα and περικεφαλαίαν in 1 Thess 5:8) and drunkenness (μέθαις in Rom 13:13; μεθυσκόμενοι and μεθύουσιν in 1 Thess 5:7). Collins (2008:220) furthermore connects the clothing with Christ and the Adam-Christ typology with the eschatological day of the Lord: "With the coming of the day, the 'clothing' that is to be put on is Jesus Christ, that is, Christ as Lord."

As for 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, while the clothing metaphors are purely eschatological, an allusion to the imagery of baptism is probably not impossible. In terms of Paul's thought on baptism, the theme of the resurrection is prominent (esp. Rom 6:3-5). The same theme of resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:44 might be a continuation of the realised aspect of resurrection that is experienced in baptism,⁶ which would signify its completion. If an allusion to baptism is intended, it would at most be in the background and be present in the connotations of the language used (cf. Du Toit 2011:63-64).

3.2 Colossians and Ephesians (the disputed letters)

In Colossians 2:11-15, the reference to baptism is explicit in verse 12. This passage shows several elements of similarity with Romans 6:2-8. There is especially a similarity with (1) the theme of Christ's death and the believer's identification with His death in baptism, in which the "old person" dies (Rom 6:2,3,5,6,8; cf. Col 2:12,13), and (2) the identification of the believer with Christ's resurrection, which stands in parallel with the resurrection into new life by faith in Christ (Rom 6:4,5,8; cf. Col 2:12).

5 It is perhaps necessary here to point out that I do not understand baptism as having power to save or as mediating salvation, but that baptism symbolises and enacts salvation that has already become a reality by individual faith (Du Toit 2011:47-48).

6 The realised dimension of the new life in Christ in Rom 6 as experienced in baptism is evident from ζῶντας (vv. 11,13), the past (aorist) of the old life (συνετέφημεν, v. 4; συνεσταυρώθη, v. 6) and the reality of already being (aorist participle) slaves of righteousness (ἐδουλώθητε, v. 18). This logic is, in fact, what causes many interpreters to understand one or both of the future tenses in Rom 6:5,8 (ἐσόμεθα, v. 5; συζηήσομεν, v. 8) as "logical futures" (e.g., Kruse 2012:262; Jewett 2007:406; Wright 2002:539, 540).

Most scholars understand Colossians 3:8-12 as alluding to baptism (e.g., Moo 2008:266-267; Thompson 2005:79; Pokorný 1991:168; Wright 1986:138; Meeks 1983:188; Martin 1974:106; Ridderbos 1966:447). The correspondence with baptism can be derived from the “divestment” (ἀποτίθημι, v. 8; ἀπεκδύομαι, v. 9) of the conduct that characterises the “old person” (τὸν παλαιὸν ἄνθρωπον, v. 9) which is parallel to 2:11-12. Similarly, the “clothing” (ἐνδύω) with the “new person” (v. 10) and its virtues (v. 12) allude to the theme of resurrection and new life in 2:12. In addition, the relativising of social and ethnic identities in Christ (v. 11) is reminiscent of similar language in Galatians 3:28 where the context of baptism is explicit.

Ephesians 4:22-25 displays very much the same elements as Colossians 3:8-10, especially regarding the “old person/new person” contrast and the corresponding virtues and vices. The concept of renewal (ἀνανεώω, v. 23) is also characteristic of baptismal language (cf. Rom 12:1-2; Col 3:10). Both Lincoln (1990:289) and Schnackenburg (1982:203) argue that the language in this passage is reminiscent of baptismal catechesis. Schnackenburg (1982:203) points to the use of infinitives which show syntactical similarities with the language of education (see διδάχθητε, v. 21). Mitton (1976:164) argues that it was a well-known figure of speech in the early Christian ethic doctrine to refer to the putting off of vices as if they were old clothes. This metaphor probably became entrenched in the practice where the baptismal candidates divested themselves of old clothes and clothed themselves with new clothes after baptism (cf. Meeks 1983:151), especially a white robe (Ferguson 2009:148; George 1994:281).

The question is whether baptismal imagery features in the background of Ephesians 6:11-15. Mitton (1976:220) thinks that the putting on of the complete armour is a step that a believer has to take in order to accept the offer of experiencing God’s spiritual power. He argues that this notion would be fitting at baptism, when a Christ-believer is ready to walk the walk of discipleship. If the reference to spiritual armour in Romans 13:12 can be applied to a baptismal context, it is conceivable that baptism might figure in the background of Ephesians 6:11-15 as well (cf. Du Toit 2011:75; 1 Thess 5:8).

4. THE PARTICIPATORY AND CONSCIOUS CHARACTER OF THE “CLOTHE” METAPHOR

If the middle voice in which the “clothe” metaphor is mostly employed signifies conscious participation on the part of the subject, it should additionally be demonstrated by the context in which the metaphor is employed.⁷

4.1 The undisputed letters

To be “clothed” with a quality or attribute is to take on the characteristics of that in which one is clothed (Hays 2000:272; Ariheia & Nida 1975:84), which in Galatians 3:27 is Christ Himself. The “putting on” of the character of Christ corresponds to a “new spiritual existence” (Fung 1988:172; cf. Ridderbos 1966:447). At the heart of Paul’s baptismal imagery lies the transformation of identity that the Galatians have undergone (Hays 2000:272; cf. Collins 2008:101-102). Beasley-Murray ([1962] 1972:148-149) argues that the literal stripping off of clothes and the putting on of clothes corresponds to the stripping off of an old life and the putting on of a new one which has become realised in the individual believer (cf. Col 3:9,10). The same meaning can be identified in part with bishop Cyril of Jerusalem’s *Lectures on the Mysteries*. He saw the divestment of clothes prior to baptism as the putting off of the old person (cf. Col 3:9). He understood the nakedness at baptism as imitation of the cross of Christ (cf. Col 2:15) and as

⁷ See Du Toit (2011) for a more elaborate exegetical treatment of these aspects in the “clothe” metaphor.

restoration of the likeness of Adam in Paradise who was naked but not ashamed (cf. Gen 2:25; in Ferguson 2009:477).

When the full force of the aorist and the middle voice are allowed for in Galatians 3:27 (ἐνδύσασθε), baptism can be understood in such a way as to mean that the human person acted in baptism and “clothed” *himself or herself* with Christ (cf. Barth 1969:116). The “clothing” can then not be understood as something that needs to be done after baptism, but something that already has gone into effect at the time of baptism.⁸ Although verses 23 and 25 certainly bear the notion of faith as a salvation-historical moment in history (e.g., Versteeg 1983:93-94), faith in verses 24 and 26 and baptism in verse 27 can hardly be understood mechanistically as if working *ex opere operato* (Fung 1988:173; contra Schweitzer 1912:225-226 and Lake 1911:385). The clothing with Christ at baptism is rather the way in which faith is actualised in the life of the individual. The subjective participation in the act of faith can be derived from Abraham whose believing was counted as righteousness (ἐπίστευσεν, v. 6), and faith in Jesus Christ (πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, v. 22).⁹ The subjective mode of Abraham’s believing is logically carried over to the faith of the Christ-believer. Furthermore, it is probable that Galatians 3:27-28 formed part of baptismal liturgy in the early church (Collins 2008:100; Witherington III 1998:270; Fung 1988:175; Betz 1979:184; Schlier [1949] 1971) or part of baptismal catechesis (Dunn 1993:203), which underlines the subjective, participatory character of the language in Galatians 3:27. This liturgical formula probably communicated information regarding the eschatological status of believers, and constituted their cultural and religious self-understanding and responsibility in the present age (Betz 1979:184). Paul probably reminded his readers of their identification with the new identity in Christ and their renunciation of the old identity by faith (Du Toit 2011:51; cf. Collins 2008:101-102).

In Romans 13:12-14, the “clothe” metaphor functions in terms of paranesis (cf. the imperative ἐνδύσασθε, v. 14), where the believer has to resist evil consciously, which in turn underscores human involvement and participation (Du Toit 2011:67, 69). In view of the “old person” that has died in Christ and the “new person” that has been put on, Romans 13:12-14 carries the notion that we as believers “are consciously to embrace Christ in such a way that his character is manifested in all that we do and say” (Moo 1996:825-826). In comparison to Galatians 3:27,

⁸ The aorist can be described as denoting a snapshot of a past action (Wallace 1996:555).

⁹ Although the phrase can be understood either as a subjective genitive (“[the] faith[fulness] of Jesus Christ”: Hays 2000:239-240; Longenecker 1990:145), it is more likely an objective genitive (“faith in Jesus Christ”: George 1994:181-182, 257-258; Dunn 1993:164, 195; Fung 1988:165; Betz 1979:117, 175). Silva (2004:227-234) convincingly argues for viewing the phrase as an objective genitive, for the following main reasons: (1) The witness from the Greek fathers (e.g., Chrysostom) who understood it as “faith in Christ” shows that native Greek speakers had no difficulty in understanding the phrase as an objective genitive, and that such an understanding was not unnatural (cf. Lk 6:12; Rom 3:3). (2) The human response of believing is undeniably present in the New Testament (e.g., ἔχω with πιστις: Mt 17:20; 21:21; Mk 4:40; 11:22; Lk 17:6; faith contrasted with doubt: Mk 11:23). (3) In Paul’s other letters, he uses πιστις in reference to faith in Christ rather than as an attribute of Christ (e.g., Rom 4:5,9), and never unambiguously refers to πίστις that belongs to Christ. Faith(fullness) that belongs to Christ is thus not characteristic of Paul. (4) In Gal 2-3, when Paul uses the verb πιστεύω, he seems to use it mostly in connection with our faith in God or Christ (Gal 2:16; 3:6,22). In Gal 2:16, the clause εἰς Χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν ἐπίστευσάμεν, exegetes the phrase πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (similarly τοῖς πιστεύουσιν in 3:22). Paul’s language about faith thus has to be understood against the contrast between the notions of law-works (as human action) over against the act of faith, which remains a prominent theme in Paul. That Paul was capable of using a subjective genitive or that he might have used the genitive with some ambiguity in relation to Christ is, however, not being denied here.

the clothing with Christ has thus more to do with the moral dimension and the spiritual battle of the new life in Christ that result from baptism than with baptism itself (Du Toit 2011:68; cf. Wright 2002:729; Cranfield 1979:688; Barrett [1962] 1975:254). An eschatological motive, which converges with the baptismal motive is evident in verses 11 to 12 (Dunn 1988:787; Cranfield 1979:682-683), in that baptism signifies the reality of the new eschatological era that was inaugurated at Christ's first advent.

The eschatological motive in 2 Corinthians 5:2-4 is carried on with baptism and completes the new eschatological way of existence that was inaugurated in Christ (Du Toit 2011:66; cf. Furnish 1984:296). The eschatological language thus points to the transformation of the earthly way of existence. In addition, the hope constituted by the eschatological language serves as the basis for walking by faith (v. 7) and a life focussed on pleasing the Lord (v. 9).

In 1 Thessalonians 5:8, the "clothe" metaphor functions within the context of the hortatory subjunctive (νήφωμεν; see Wallace 1996:464) to be sober. Paul defines soberness as wearing the spiritual armour. In this context, the "clothe" metaphor thus functions as a theological imperative wherein the believer is actively and consciously involved.

In 1 Corinthians 15:53-54, Paul ends his argument about the living and dead that both have to have transformed bodies to enter their final heavenly existence (Fee 1987:802). Barrett ([1971] 1976:382) connects immortality (ἄφθαρτος, v. 52) with the consummation of the new humanity. In other words, that which was eschatologically inaugurated in Christ is completed at the parousia.

4.2 Colossians and Ephesians (the disputed letters)

In Colossians 2:11-15, the "flesh" is put off in "the circumcision of Christ" which probably points to His whole body and thus His death on the cross, and not so much to baptism as such (e.g., Thompson 2005:56-57; Versteeg 1983:107-108; Ridderbos 1966:451; Beasley-Murray [1962] 1972:153). The circumcision in Christ in turn alludes to the circumcision in the heart (Moo 2008:197; Pokorný 1991:124) and probably points to conversion (Moo 2008:198,200; Dunn 1996:156). In the death of Christ, believers divest themselves of their "body of flesh" which is not their physical bodies, but the "body" which "serves sin" (Zerwick & Grosvenor 1988:606) and denotes "the domination of sin" (Moo 2008:200).¹⁰ The old "self" is being stripped off (Moo 2008:200) and being buried in Christ. The death of the "self" in Christ (v. 11), the identification with Christ's death and resurrection (vv. 11-13), and faith in the power of God (v. 12) all signify the baptismal participation of the baptismal candidate in the actions of "putting off" (v. 11) and baptism itself (v. 12). In 2:15, the term ἀπεκδυσάμενος is used in connection with Christ's "divesting Himself" of the rulers and authorities (Zerwick & Grosvenor 1988:607;¹¹ cf. Harris 1991:110).

The "putting off" of the "old humanity" and the "clothing" with the "new humanity" in Colossians 3:8-10 point to two ways of existence, the one before or outside of Christ, and the other as inaugurated by Christ's death and resurrection (Thompson 2005:78; Lincoln 2000:643). The old humanity in Adam is "the embodiment of the unregenerate humanity", and the humanity

¹⁰ This notion corresponds to "the body of this death" of Rom 7:24 and "the body of sin" of Rom 6:6, which in turn corresponds with the old ἄνθρωπος of both Rom 6:6 and Col 3:9.

¹¹ Zerwick and Grosvenor translate the term ἀπεκδυσάμενος reflexively in spite of its being a deponent middle.

in Christ is the “recreated humanity in the Creator’s image” (O’Brien 1982:191; v. 10; cf. Moo 2008:268; Dunn 1996:222). The new identity in Christ, however, has to be actualised in the life of the individual believer. The “clothe” metaphor in this passage functions in the context of the exhortation to renew the mind to be in line with the new reality of life in Christ (vv. 1,2). Verses 12 to 17 are about the appropriation of the character of the new life, which constitutes an ethical dimension in which the human person is actively involved. This subjective, theologically imperative dimension of the new humanity in Christ corresponds well with the reflexive, participatory function of the middle voice (ενδύσασμενοι, v. 10). Verses 16 and especially 17 show a close relationship of the “clothe” metaphor with worship. Since baptism is probably implied with the “clothe” metaphor here, baptism itself can be seen as part of the believer’s worship (cf. Rom 12:1-2; see Du Toit 2011:58).

In Ephesians 4:22-25, the concept of the renewal of the mind is central (v. 23). As in Romans 13:12 and Colossians 3:8, the word ἀποτίθημι (Eph 4:22) bears ethical connotations (Mitton 1976:164). The new identity in Christ has to be “put on” in order for the ethical dimensions to become visible (Lincoln 1990:287), which can be understood as a subjective actualisation of what happened inwardly (cf. Du Toit 2011:62).

The imperative ἐνδύσασθε in Ephesians 6:11 is ultimately rooted in the indicative of the new humanity in Christ (4:24; cf. Lincoln 1990:442). It is therefore noteworthy that most of the armour is defensive (cf. 1 Thess 5:8) and the instruction is not to fight or win the enemy, but to remain standing (vv. 11,13,14). It is to guard and keep what has already been won (Lincoln 1990:442-443; cf. Roberts 1983:173). Hoehner ([2002] 2003:822) by implication emphasises the subjective, reflexive character of the middle voice of the “clothe” metaphor when he writes: “The middle voice indicates that they are responsible for putting on the full armour of God.”

5. CONCLUSIONS AND QUESTIONS

The close connection of the “clothe” metaphor with baptism has been demonstrated from the practice in the early church as well as from the exegesis of representative passages from the undisputed Pauline letters, as well as from the disputed letters, Colossians and Ephesians. The participatory, subjective character of the middle voice in which the “clothe” metaphor is mostly employed has been shown to correspond with the context in which these metaphors are employed. In terms of baptism or the ethical dimension wherein the “clothe” metaphor is used, the human person is the subject of all the actions (1 Thess 5:8; Gal 3:27; Rom 13:12-14; Col 2:11 [by implication]; 3:8-12; Eph 4:22-25; 6:11-15). These tendencies in turn argue for understanding baptism as part of a theological imperative (esp. Gal 3:27), in which human beings consciously act on and appropriate what they have received in Christ. This theological imperative, however, does not replace the theological indicative of what is received in Christ, which in fact remains the basis for the imperative. The eschatological context in which the “clothe” metaphor is employed (1 Cor 15:53-54; 2 Cor 5:3-4) is consistent with baptismal language, and can be understood as the culmination of salvation that has already become a reality by individual faith at the time of baptism.

In response to these conclusions, it can be asked if it is not anachronistic to relate the justification of infant baptism to Paul’s thoughts on the “clothe” metaphor. However, if Paul’s thought on the “clothe” metaphor and its bearing on the understanding of baptism is considered as normative in justifying and/or informing the doctrine of infant baptism, some of the questions directed to adherents of infant baptism which flow from these conclusions

(although not necessarily final), are the following: (1) If baptism is understood as an objective act of God, how is the reflexive and participatory character of the “clothing” action accounted for at the time of baptism? (2) How are the “putting off” of flesh (as denoting an old way of existence outside of Christ) and the “clothing” with the new identity in Christ incorporated within the understanding of baptism? (3) If soberness and resistance to evil are intrinsically part of what is intended by the baptismal candidate at baptism, how can this meaning form part of the doctrine of infant baptism? (4) How would the renewal of the mind of the person being baptised be accounted for *at the time* of baptism? (5) If God acts in baptism, and if that act is not understood *ex opere operato* as if salvation is mediated fully or in part at baptism, what would be the nature of God’s act in baptism? In other words, what exactly is baptism doing to you? If baptism in itself does not ensure salvation, why would it be necessary to baptise an infant?

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TREFWOORDE

Beklee-metafoor
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