

Baptism, Lutheran Confession and Ecumenical Relations. Three Contexts

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The article examines attitude of the Lutheran Church towards baptisms as reflexion of the ecumenical relations. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland is a historical majority church with official theological dialogues with Roman Catholic, Orthodox, historical Protestant and Anglican churches and churches influenced by the Anabaptist tradition. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of Ingria in Russia is a growing historical minority church in a country where Orthodox churches have been dominant. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thailand is a growing minority church in an overwhelmingly Buddhist country. It is also a minority among Christians. In spite of the differences in their contextual settings, all of them share similar stands in questions concerning baptism and ecumenical relations.

In all three cases the Lutheran churches accept the baptism of other churches. This is stated in their Constitutions and Church Orders. This way they identify themselves as part of the Church Universal. Baptism is not usually a problem in their relation to Roman Catholic, Orthodox and historical Protestant churches. Only the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland has had official theological dialogues with churches drawing from Anabaptist tradition, but the others interact with churches with this tradition. These interactions are mainly not recorded. Re-baptisms have created tension between Lutherans and Pentecostals in Finland. In Thailand, re-baptisms were a controversy in the 1960s and 1970s prior to the beginning of Lutheran ministry.



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