

1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

CHP.29 OF BAPTISM – Msg. 3

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I. BAPTISM – A REFORMED CONTEXT

- Introduction to the 1689 29:1-4 reformed, confessional context leading up to Christian Sacraments.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BAPTISM

Para. #1 (Unit 1 in 4 Parts)

- Part 1 = Biblical Witness
- Part 2 = Variant in Baptism's significance = Sacramentalism / Infant Baptism.
- Part 3 = Variant in Baptism's significance = Anti-Sacramentalism/ Infant Baptism.
- Part 4 = Circumcision / Baptism Analogy¹

III. THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

Para. #2 – (Unit 2 in 4 Parts)

- Part 1 = Biblical Witness.
- Part 2 = Biblical Covenants & Infant Baptism.
- Part 3 = Why is Infant Baptism widely practiced?
- Part 4 = Children of the Church. (A)
- Part 5 = Children of the Church. (B)

IV. THE ELEMENTS & MODE OF BAPTISM

Para. #3 & #4 (Unit 3 in 2 Parts)

- The Elements Identified & Considered
- The Mode Identified & Considered

¹ Analogy - A comparison between two things, typically for the purpose of explanation or clarification.

Para. #1 - Unit #1 – Part 2 – Various Pedo-Baptist witnesses.

Recap from the Biblical Witness: Biblical baptism has connected to it TWO clear and identifiable parts:

(A) Declarative of a personal confession

(B) Symbolic of a spiritual truth

JHN.4:1-3; MTH. 28:19-20; ACTS 2:38-41; ACTS 8:12-13;

ACTS 9:17-18; MTH.3:6; ROM.6:1-3; COL. 2:12; 1 PET. 3:21-21

As a Baptist church, we confess that these TWO clear and biblical identified aspects regarding Christian baptism (under normal/ordinary circumstances) can only be honestly said of, or applied to individuals who can give evidence of a **believable/credible** confession of faith **accompanied** with verifiable gospel fruits evident in one's life. Or, to say it another way, we believe that only disciples of Jesus ought to receive Christian baptism.

While we share this belief with many other Christian societies (Mennonites, Amish, Brethren, Pentecostals), we must, at least acknowledge that there are more (according to credible sources) societies of people; who also identify themselves as Christian, that baptize not only disciples of Jesus, but also the infants of professing parents. (Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, Anglicans, Lutherans, Methodists, Church of the Nazarene, Various Reformed Churches, United Church of Christ, and Presbyterians = 80% who identify as being Christian)².

Thus, it would be prudent for us (least we be considered “narrow-minded” Baptists... which I have no problem being labeled as such; so long as Scripture is on my side) that we compare the significance of baptism (as learned last week) to what some of these other societies *claim* that Christian baptism signifies.

² https://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Infant_Baptism

➤ **Historical context / situation**

Prior to doing so, it would be helpful to very briefly set the issue of baptism in its historical context. To do so, let's consider it in FOUR important steps:³

1. The NT witness/historical setting.
2. The first post-biblical witness 2nd century.
 - (a) Tertullian (*protest against the biblical significance being expanded*)
3. Subsequent, early post-biblical witness 3rd century
 - (a) Augustine (*biblical significance expanded*)
4. Reformation period (reforming the already biblical significance *expanded*).

First post-biblical witness: Tertullian (160-220 AD) a *protest against the “biblical significance being expanded”*):

The earliest explicit mention of infant “baptism” in the history of the church is from the African church father, Tertullian, who lived from about A.D. 160 to about 220. He was born in Carthage, studied in Rome for a legal career and was converted to Christianity in about 195. He was the first Christian theologian to write in Latin and exerted significant influence through his apologetic works.

The work, *de baptismo* (Concerning Baptism) was written, evidently between 200 and 206. In it Tertullian questions the wisdom of giving baptism to infants. He says,

*According to everyone’s condition and disposition, and also his age, the delaying of baptism is more profitable, especially in the case of little children. **For why is it necessary—if [baptism itself] is not necessary—that the sponsors should be thrust into danger? For they may either fail of their promise by death, or they may be***

³ Kurt Aland; *Did the early church baptize infants*; Westminster Press

mistaken by a child's proving of wicked disposition.... They that understand the weight of baptism will rather dread the receiving of it, than the delaying of it. An entire faith is secure of salvation! (de baptismo, ch. xviii)

What we see here is that the first explicit witness to infant baptism does not assume that it is automatically given. In other words, at the turn of the third century it is not taken for granted, as it is 200 years later when St. Augustine addresses the matter. Tertullian speaks the way one would if the practice were in dispute, possibly as a more recent development.

- At the end of the second century yr.201 onward the idea gradually gained ground that baptism works more less mystically or in someway magically. Even Augustine seems to have considered baptism as effective *ex opera operato* (Latin: meaning that sacraments work automatically and independently of the faith of the recipient) in the case of children

Subsequent, early post-biblical witness: Augustine (354-430 AD) *biblical significance expanded.*

Augustin Book 3- CHAP. 22⁴

For this is the point aimed at by the controversy, against the novelty of which we have to struggle by the aid of ancient truth: that it is clearly altogether superfluous for infants to be baptized. Not that this opinion is avowed in so many words, lest so firmly established a custom of the Church should be unable to endure its assailants. But if we are taught to render help to orphans, how much more ought we to labour in behalf of those children who, though under the protection of parents, will still be left more destitute and wretched than orphans, should that grace of Christ

⁴ <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/3296/3296-h/3296-h.htm>

Project Gutenberg's The Confessions of Saint Augustine, by Saint Augustine

be denied them, which they are all unable to demand for themselves?

What we see here is that very quickly after the second century and well into the third Augustine emphasized that we ought to as Christians be anxious to secure the baptism of our infants and in fact, to neglect it was to treat them as orphans!

Notice also, there is here in this statement a hint of “that grace of Christ” which can be conferred to the infant through their baptism.

Thus, he and the early visible, professing Christian church **as a majority** (though not exclusively) regarded baptism as absolutely necessary and held that unbaptized children were lost souls.

One can learn elsewhere in Augustine’s works that he taught baptism canceled/blotted out original sin and guilt inherited from our fallen father Adam but does not entirely nor wholly removes its effects/corruption upon our human nature.

➤ **FIRST (VARIANT) of the biblical significance of baptism = SACRAMENTALIST**

Definition: A belief in or use of sacramental rites, acts, or objects in themselves are inherently efficacious (effective) and necessary for one’s salvation.

- (a) That baptism sets an indelible mark on the recipient as a communicant member of the Church;
- (b) That baptism delivers from the guilt of original sin and of all actual sins committed up to the time of baptism, removes the pollution of sin, though concupiscence remains, and sets man free from eternal punishment and from all positive temporal punishments;
- (c) That baptism works spiritual renewal by the infusion of sanctifying grace and of the supernatural virtues of faith, hope and love;

(d) That baptism incorporates the person baptized in the communion of the saints and in the visible Church.

1. **Excerpts from the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church regarding baptism (Eastern Orthodox Church, Oriental Orthodoxy, Assyrian Church of the East is very similar):⁵**

The Baptism of Infants:

1250 “Born with a fallen human nature and tainted by original sin, children also have need of the new birth in Baptism to be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called. The sheer gratuitousness of the grace of salvation is particularly manifest in infant Baptism. The Church and the parents would deny a child the priceless grace of becoming a child of God were they not to confer Baptism shortly after birth.

1251 Christian parents will recognize that this practice also accords with their role as nurturers of the life that God has entrusted to them.

1252 The practice of infant Baptism is an immemorial (ancient) tradition of the Church. There is explicit testimony to this practice from the second century on, and it is quite possible that, from the beginning of the apostolic preaching, when whole "households" received baptism, infants may also have been baptized.

Faith and Baptism

1254 For all the baptized, infants, children or adults, faith must grow **after** Baptism. For this reason the Church celebrates each year at the Easter Vigil the renewal of baptismal promises. Preparation for Baptism leads only to the threshold of new life.

⁵ https://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a1.htm

Baptism is the source of that new life in Christ from which the entire Christian life springs forth.

1255 For the **grace of Baptism to unfold**, the parents' help is important. So too is the role of the godfather and godmother, who must be firm believers, able and ready to help the newly baptized - child or adult on the road of Christian life. Their task is a truly ecclesial function (officium). The whole ecclesial community bears some responsibility for the development and safeguarding of the grace given at Baptism.

1263 By Baptism **all sins are forgiven**, original sin and all personal sins, as well as all punishment for sin.⁶⁶ In those who have been reborn nothing remains that would impede their entry into the Kingdom of God, neither Adam's sin, nor personal sin, nor the consequences of sin, the gravest of which is separation from God.

1265 Baptism not only purifies from all sins, but also **makes the individual "a new creature," an adopted son of God**, who has become a "partaker of the divine nature," member of Christ and co-heir with him, and a temple of the Holy Spirit.

2. LUTHERAN SEMI-SACRAMENTALIST witness of biblical significance expanded.⁶

Baptism and Its Purpose

Q. Can you please clarify the Lutheran view of baptism and what is its purpose? Does the child become a Christian when baptized?

Although we do not claim to understand how this happens or how it is possible, we believe (because of what the Bible says about

⁶ <http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2607>
The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod)

Baptism) that when an infant is baptized God creates faith in the heart of that infant. This faith cannot yet, of course, be expressed or articulated, yet it is real and present all the same.

The LCMS does not believe that baptism is **ABSOLUTELY** necessary for salvation. The thief on the cross was saved (apparently without baptism), as were all true believers in the Old Testament era. Mark 16:16 implies that it is not the absence of baptism that condemns a person but the absence of faith, and there are clearly other ways of coming to faith by the power or the Holy Spirit (reading or hearing the Word of God).

Martin Luther: Luther did not entirely rid himself of the Roman Catholic conception of baptism. Luther (like Augustine) did not regard the water in baptism as just any old common water, but as a water which had become, through the Word with its inherent divine power, a gracious water which had life, a washing of spiritual regeneration.

In the special section on infant baptism in his Large Catechism Luther argues that infant baptism is **God-pleasing because persons so baptized were reborn and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.**⁷

➤ **CONCLUSION of FIRST (VARIANT) of the biblical significance witness of baptism = SACRAMENTALIST**

- (a) To demand that salvific grace is indeed conferred by a ceremonial ritual is to trample on the very Sovereign throne rights of God Almighty – who grants faith to whom He so chooses.
- (b) To tell an individual who has no, believable, credible (not perfect), profession of being a disciple of Jesus, accompanied by some verifiable gospel fruits and allow

⁷ <http://bookofconcord.org/lc-1-intro.php>

that person to be led into the pits of Hell by a lie is nothing less than blatant heresy of the darkest type!

- (c) From a practical church body-life perspective, it produces a dead, lifeless, community of formalists; that at best evidences an empty moralistic life regulated by fear of God's judgement and at worst an outward disciple of Jesus on Sunday when formally gathered and a pleasure seeker Mon – Sat.

Mth. 15:6

“...ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.”