

1689 Baptist Confession of Faith

CHP.29 OF BAPTISM – Msg. 5

Blue Hymn Books – Pg. # 685

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.

2 Tim. 1:7 God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

**Para. #1 - Unit #1 – Part 4 – Variant in Baptism’s significance
= Circumcision / Baptism Analogy**

INTRODUCTION:

A recap of the historical steps up to the Reformation / Anti-Sacramentalism and those who retained the tradition of Infant Sprinkling “Baptism”.

Concluding Observation from Part 3 ‘Anti-Sacramentalism/ Infant Baptism’ :

1. **Covenant Members:**

The covenant of grace belongs not to believers only, but also to their children.

2. **Infants were Circumcised in the Old Covenant:**

The covenant sign in the Old Testament was circumcision, which was applied to children, as well as in certain cases to adults.

3. **Baptism is parallel to Circumcision:**

The covenant sign in the New Testament is baptism, which has replaced circumcision and should be applied to both believers and their children.

THE FIRST of TWO PILLARS: Circumcision -Two Pillars (Circumcision & Covenant Theology) the attempted biblical rationale for the practice of Anti-Sacramentalist Infant Sprinkling “Baptizing” ?

The Belgic Confession – Article 34²

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, in whom the law is fulfilled, has by his shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood, which anyone might do or wish to do in order to atone or satisfy for sins.

Having abolished circumcision, which was done with blood, Christ established in its place the sacrament of baptism.

By it we are received into God's church and set apart from all other people and alien religions, that we may wholly belong to him whose mark and sign we bear. Baptism also witnesses to us that God, being our gracious Father, will be our God forever.

...**For** that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists who are not content with a single baptism once received and also condemn the baptism of the children of believers. We believe our children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as little children were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises made to our children.

And truly, Christ has shed his blood no less for washing the little children of believers than he did for adults.

Therefore, they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, just as the Lord commanded in the law that by offering a lamb for them the sacrament of the suffering and death of Christ would be granted them shortly after their birth. This was the sacrament of Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, baptism does for our children what circumcision did for the Jewish people....”³

² The Belgic Confession is a doctrinal standard document to which many of the Reformed churches subscribe. The Confession forms part of the Three Forms of Unity of the Reformed Church, which are still the official subordinate standards of the Dutch Reformed Church.

³ <https://www.rca.org/resources/belgic-confession-article-34-sacrament-baptism>

The Heidelberg Catechism – Question #74

Q: Should infants, too, be baptized?

A: Yes: Infants as well as adults belong to God's covenant and congregation. Through Christ's blood the redemption from sin and the Holy Spirit, who works faith, are promised to them no less than to adults. Therefore, by baptism, as sign of the covenant, they must be incorporated into the Christian church and distinguished from the children of unbelievers. **This was done in the old covenant by circumcision, in place of which baptism was instituted in the new covenant.**

➤ **Observation:** Thus, we can clearly deduce that our fellow Anti-Sacramentalists construct their biblical rationale upon the so-called unity and/or parallelism that lies between OT circumcision and NT baptism. Therefore, it does us; as honest inquirers (who wishes to better understand their doctrine of infant sprinkling) no good to only focus upon the NT and its silence of such a practice.

Rather, we must dive deeper into the assertion that circumcision is in fact parallel with baptism and furthermore to what extent does such an analogy exist?

(a) What is the link between these two signs?

(b) Just how closely related is circumcision to baptism?

These are indeed important questions, because the indirect inferences derived from Scripture that are employed by Paedo-Baptists to support their practice lie at the very center of their theology regarding the Nature of the Church and the Sacraments of the Church.

It is you could say a PILLAR which justifies/supports their particular act of religious worship (infant sprinkling), and without such a pillar this part of their worship would be in gross error.

Or to state another way...if it can be demonstrated that there is an **identical** relationship between C and B, then infants should receive NC Christian baptism with the same understanding as infants received OC circumcision.

On the other hand, if they are not identical, then there would be no warrant for the practice of infant sprinkling without a clear NT command. To do so would violate one of the core doctrines of reformed theology - The Regulative Principle of Religious Worship...namely God shall only be worshipped by the means that He has instituted and not according to the imaginations and devices of men.

THE ANALOGY Reviewed:

What is an analogy? An analogy is a comparison of two separate, non-identical things that share certain traits. For instance, an apple is similar to an orange in that it is a piece of fruit and is round. Yet, they are not exactly the same. We must admit that there are several clear and distinct difference between the two. Thus, no reasonable person would claim that apples and oranges are perfectly identical.

Similarly, we may state that although there is a link between circumcision and baptism, this does not make them unequivocally identical in their purpose and/or meaning.

I. The Differences:

By underlining the differences between OT ‘C’ and NT ‘B’ the ERROR of ASSUMING that no NT command is needed to unequivocally make baptism equal to circumcision will become apparent.

| Circumcision | Baptism |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Male Exclusivity | Y / N |
| 2. Outward Jewish Citizenship | Y / N |
| 3. Unbelieving Adults | Y / N |
| 4. Children of Unbelievers | Y / N |
| 5. Jewish ethnic identity | Y / N |
| 6. Broad & Inclusive | Y / N |
| 7. Covenant Condition | Y / N |

➤ **Objections to these noted differences:**

Often Paedobaptists argue that these differences are modified by the very nature of the New Covenant. Even though there is no express Biblical teaching regarding the baptism of infant girls, or the exclusion of

unbelieving adult servants/employees and various other modern alterations/practices – they are all necessary and obvious inferences implied by the New Covenant.

➤ **Their Pandora’s box**

For the Paedobaptist to use the New Testament at this point and the nature of the new covenant as their authority to determine “obvious alterations” which are needed between circumcision and baptism, they then have no grounds to keep “some” aspects of circumcision *entirely* upon the grounds of the Old Testament.

II. The Similarities

This leads us to the similarities between circumcision and baptism. There does exist an analogy linking them. Reformed Baptists do not deny that there is a relationship between the two. Just because they are not identical, does not mean they are not related.

| Circumcision | Baptism |
|---|----------------|
| 1. A sign of a gracious covenant | Y / N |
| 2. A mark of inward faith | Y / N |
| 3. Typological reference of a circumcised heart | Y / N |

➤ **Concluding Reflections**

Although circumcision and baptism can be said to have some spiritual shared analogy, it cannot be said that they are identical. Thus, to claim that infant circumcision in its meaning and purpose can be simply transferred over to baptism is naive at best and reckless at worst.