



Chapter Twenty One: The Sacraments

Part One — Baptism

WCF 27.1

Signs

Authoritative divine communications, revelations to us.
“Visible (and tangible) words” — seeing, touching, and tasting, we are taught at a different level than hearing.
Supplements of the word of God by divinely authorized dramatic images.

Seals

God’s actions on our behalf —
God’s confirmation and guarantee of his promises.
Comparable to a governmental seal on a birth certificate: “This is a citizen, with all the rights...”
Rom 4:11 — “a seal of righteousness”

Participation

Locations of God’s presence, where God is interacting with us in the depths of our hearts.
God meets us in the waters and at the table.
1Co 10:16 — a *communion (koinonia)* of the blood and body of Christ (contrast v. 20).
In his intimate presence God helps us grow in faith.

Baptism

WCF 28.1: “A sacrament ... ordained by Jesus ... for solemn admission ... into the visible church; ... a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of ... ingrafting ... regeneration ... remission of sins, of ... walk(ing) in newness of life. ...

Entrance — Comparable to a citizen’s oath of allegiance. Means by which the rights of Kingdom-citizenship become ours. Kidd: Frame might well have taken us to 1Co 12:13: “we were all baptized into one body” — baptism is more of a “we” thing than *SBL* implies.

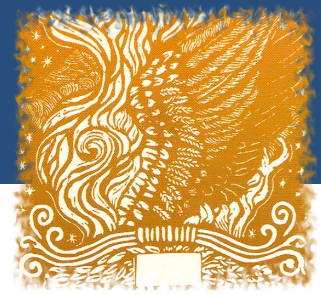
Sign of:

- *Cleansing* — 1Co 6:11; Eph 5:26; Tt 3:5 — comparable to OT ceremonial washings; e.g., Lev 8:5-6; 14:8-9, 15.
- *Repentance* — Mt 3:6, 11

- *Union with Christ* — Mt 28:19, “into the name of ...”. You belong to the person “into whom” you’ve been baptized — see 1Co 1:13, 15; 10:2. Our baptism places us in union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom 6:3-6) — not to mention, in union with Christ’s people (see the previous bullet point).

Seal — Mt 28:19, a naming ceremony; see Num 6:24-27; Rev 2:17; 3:12 — points to our sealing with the Holy Spirit, Eph 1:12-13; 2Tm 2:19.

Frame’s Via Media — Frame: Neither Zwingli’s “mere sign” or “mere symbol,” nor the RCC notion that baptism is the new birth or some other notion of baptismal regeneration. Kidd: “It’s easier to say what it *isn’t* than what it *is*. Maybe that means it is more important just to *do* it. As Calvin said about the Table: ‘I better experience it than understand it.’”



The Mode of Baptism

Immersion only?:

- “Many waters” at Jn 3:23;
- people “go down into water” at Mt 3:16;
- immersion as an apt symbol for dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6:2-6; Col 2:11-12)

Sprinkling or pouring?

- *Baptizo* doesn’t necessarily mean “immerse” — e.g., Lk 11:38 (for a pdf of Kidd’s “Reflections on Immersion vs. Pouring/Sprinkling,” go to: <http://www.rts.edu/Site/Staff/rkidd/kiddcoursespring2007.aspx>)
- Jesus could have needed “many waters” because of the numbers of people coming
- “Going down into” and “coming up out of” the water could mean something besides immersion, like stepping into the water, being sprinkled, and then stepping out of the water
- Rom 6 turns on our crucifixion, not his burial
- Biblical evidence for sprinkling & pouring as modes of baptism:
 - Heb 9:10’s OT “baptisms” are explained in terms of sprinklings in Heb 9:13, 19, 21
 - Christians are “sprinkled” with the blood of Jesus (Heb 10:22; 12:24; 1Pt 1:2; Ac 2:17)
 - Christians’ baptism in the Spirit is presented as a “pouring” — Ac 2:33; Rom 5:5 — note the Spirit’s “coming upon us” (Ac 1:8) or “falling on us” (Ac 10:44)

Frame: “My own view is inconclusive. I think that immersion, sprinkling, and pouring are all legitimate means of baptism and that none should be excluded.”

Infant Baptism

Paedobaptists (“baby baptizers”) vs. **Credobaptists** (“baptizers of those who say, ‘I believe’”)

Burden of proof: Credobaptists say that since there is no NT command to baptize infants, we shouldn’t. Paedobaptists say that the total biblical evidence (which includes children in the covenant) implies we should baptize infants of believers.

Credobaptist considerations: 1) No NT command to baptize; 2) baptism is tied to faith & repentance (e.g., Ac 2:41, 8:12; 10:44-48; 16:14-15, 32-33)

“Reformed Paedobaptist” considerations:

- The analogy with Abe’s circumcision, which was a “seal of the righteousness of faith,” applied to Abe’s children — making them part of the OT “visible church,” without presumption as to their personal election — see Dt 10:16
- In both testaments, the promises are “for us and for our children” (Gen 26:3-4, etc.) ... children were included in redemption and covenant renewals (e.g. the exodus ... see 1Co 10:1-2 ... “all” went through the waters)
- Jesus received and blessed children (Lk 18:15-17) and the apostles repeated the principle that this is “for us and for our children”
- Household baptisms (Ac 16:15 ... 1Co 1:16) — Frame: “... the principle is that God is gathering families, not just individuals into his kingdom.”
- 1Co 7:14 — children of even one believing parent are called “holy”

Frame: “I don’t believe that Christians should break fellowship over this issue. Indeed, I wish there were a way that believers holding different positions on this matter could belong to the same church. But this doesn’t seem to be a widely held position in the evangelical church today.”

Kidd — for a pdf of Kidd’s “Why Baptismal Flexibility,” go to <http://www.rts.edu/Site/Staff/rkidd/kiddcoursespring2007.aspx>