

Lesson 32: 2LCF Chapter 28: Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and Chapter 29: Of Baptism

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

What are the ordinances of the church? What functions do they serve? Can one only be saved by participating in the ordinances? Who can administer these ordinances? These are just a few of the questions that one is confronted with when entering into a discussion about these practices that Christ ordained for his church. Perhaps few practices are as manifestly experiential in the church as the ordinances, and yet few themes are as poorly understood by professing Christians in our day. Today, many Christians witness the baptisms of friends and family members, they participate in the Lord's Supper with regularity; however, few truly understand the significance of what they are engaging in.

For this reason, it may come as a surprise to some that, centuries ago, the framers of the Confession provided a clear and uncomplicated explanation of these ordinances. In this study, we will enter into their labour and review both ordinances in general before carefully considering the ordinance of baptism in particular.

Chapter 28: Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Chapter 28 provides a succinct treatment of the ordinances. The chapter and its two paragraphs can be divided into the following outline:

Outline

Paragraph 1a

I. The Institution of the Ordinances

Paragraph 1b

II. The Authorization of the Ordinances

Paragraph 1c

III. The Continuation of the Ordinances

Paragraph 2

IV. The Administration of the Ordinances³⁷²

Paragraph 1.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.

Matt. 28:19,20; 1 Cor. 11:26

Paragraph 2.

These holy appointments are to be administered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called, according to the commission of Christ.

Matt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 4:1

³⁷² Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 397.

Exposition

Chapter 28 consists of two sentences that provide a helpful explanation of the ordinances. Here learn the following:

Two Ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Support

Unlike Roman Catholicism, with its seven sacraments (baptism, confirmation, the eucharist, penance, marriage, anointing of the sick, and holy orders), the 2LCF rightly identifies the existence of two ordinances in the church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In this chapter, the framers intentionally moved away from the language of the Westminster Confession of Faith, opting for the term "ordinance" instead of "sacrament." Jim Savastio tells us why this is when he writes:

The authors of our Confession chose to use the term ordinance, which means a practice established by authority. This choice was not accidental."Ordinance" not only emphasizes that a sacrament is ordained by the head of the church, but it also distances the framers of this Confession from both the seven sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church and from the dangers of sacerdotalism.³⁷³

Sacerdotalism is a form of teaching that holds that human priests act as mediators between God and man. "Sacerdotal" is derived from the Latin word for "priest" and means "to make sacred."³⁷⁴ It shares the same root as the word sacrament. For this reason, the framers of the 2LCF chose the term "ordinance," because these practices were "ordained" by the Lord Jesus Christ during his earthly ministry.

Ordinances of Positive and Sovereign Institution

When the Confession indicates that the ordinances are of positive and sovereign institution. Positive laws and enactments were previously discussed in chapter 22 of the Confession. There we learned that "A positive law is a commandment of God that is not morally necessary... Such laws are only binding on the person or nation to whom they were given."³⁷⁵ Savastio adds that such laws are "not necessarily inferred by the law of nature or the perpetual moral law [but are] formally instituted by our sovereign Lord."³⁷⁶

This means that there is nothing inherently or naturally moral or immoral about being dipped in water or partaking in the bread and cup, except that God sovereignly commands it.

The Continuation/Perpetuity of the Ordinances

This continuation or perpetuity of the ordinances is plainly taught in two key passages:

Matthew 28:18-20

18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, *I am with you always, to the end of the age.*"

³⁷³ Jim Savastio, "Of Baptism and the Lord's Support," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire: Mentor, 2022), 482.

³⁷⁴ A helpful explanation can be found at <https://www.gotquestions.org/sacerdotalism.html>

³⁷⁵ Joseph A. Pipa, *The Lord's Day* (Fearn: Christian Focus, 1997), 26.

³⁷⁶ Jim Savastio, "Of Baptism and the Lord's Support," 482.

1 Corinthians 11:24-25

24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, *you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

The Qualified Administrators of the Ordinances

At this point, the framers of the Confession diverge from the authors of the Westminster Confession of Faith.

In the Westminster Confession, the administration of the ordinances is limited only to ordained ministers: "There be only two sacraments ordained by Christ our Lord in the Gospel, that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord: neither of which *may be dispensed by any but by a minister of the Word lawfully ordained*" (WCF 27:4). In the 2LCF, the administration of these ordinances is more discretionary: "These holy appointments are to be administered by those only who are qualified and thereunto called" (2LCF 28:2). Waldron notes that the framers "wished to steer a middle course between the clericalism of the Presbyterians and the congregationalism of the early Baptists."³⁷⁷

But, some may ask, "Why the qualification at all?" Is it not permissible for a man to baptize his daughter in a jacuzzi at home? Or for a Christian celebrity to baptize his new convert (on reality television)?

The framers of the Confession and other Reformed theologians have held that passages like 1 Corinthians 4:1 and Titus 1:7 teach that ministers of the gospel bear a particular responsibility as "stewards of the mysteries of God."

1 Corinthians 4:1

This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and *stewards* of the mysteries of God.

Titus 1:7

7 For an overseer, as God's *steward*, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain,

Waldron provides the following commentary:

It is God's stewards who have the authority to give God's servants their spiritual food-to teach and dispense to them the mysteries of God. This, of course, includes the public ministry of the Word of God. But since baptism and the Lord's Supper are visible symbols of that spiritual food and those mysteries, it is the prerogative of God's stewards to oversee and administer such ordinances. Is the Lord's Supper the spiritual ration to be given to God's servants? Then it is the spiritual responsibility of the spiritual stewards-the elders-to administer it.³⁷⁸

Moreover, it has been pointed out that these ordinances have not been given to individuals, but to the church. The Great Commission was given by the Lord Jesus Christ to the Apostles as the founding members of the church. Similarly, passages like 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 make plain that these ordinances are to take place the the church is assembled. The phrase "when you come together" repeated four times in this passage (vv. 18, 20, 33, 34).

³⁷⁷ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 401.

³⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 402.

For this reason, it has been said that the administration of the ordinances are “committed to the administration of the elders who are to preside over the church... The elders may delegate the actual performance of the ordinances to a faithful brother, but they cannot delegate the responsibility.”³⁷⁹

Chapter 29: Of Baptism

Chapter 29 provides a concise credobaptist treatment on baptism.

Outline

Paragraph 1

I. Its Spiritual Significance

Paragraph 2

II. Its Proper Subjects

Paragraphs 3-4

III. Its Outward Elements

A. With the Use of Water

B. In the Name of the Trinity

C. By the Immersion of the Person

Paragraph 1.

Baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, to be unto the party baptized, a sign of his fellowship with him, in his death and resurrection; of his being engrafted into him; of remission of sins; and of giving up into God, through Jesus Christ, to live and walk in newness of life.

Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:27; Mark 1:4; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:4

Exposition

Paragraph one goes on to explain the meaning or significance of baptism. At very onset, this paragraph clears up many misunderstandings about the significance of Christian baptism. Today, if you were to attend a baptism class in most evangelical churches, candidates for baptism would be taught that baptism exists almost exclusively as a witness to the church and/or the watching world. One might be led to believe that baptisms are performed entirely for the benefit of those who witness the ordinance. The framers of the Confession stipulate, however, that the ordinance of baptism not performed for the benefit of a third party, but for the benefit of “the party baptized.”

The Confession notes that this signifies the believer’s fellowship with Christ, union with Christ, forgiveness of sin, and newness of life. This may be summarized and further expanded upon under six headings.

1. The believer’s repentance from sin and faith in Jesus Christ (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 8:36; 13:24; 16:27-34; 19:4)

Mark 1:4

4 John appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Luke 3:3

³⁷⁹ Ibid., 404.

3 And he went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

Acts 2:38

38 And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Contrary to the view of many paedobaptists, baptism not only demonstrates the blessings of the gospel, but the saving response to gospel.

2. The forgiveness and cleansing of sin (Acts 2:38; 22:16, Hebrews 10:22)

Acts 22:16

16 And now why do you wait? Rise and be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on his name.’

Hebrews 10:22

let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

3. The Christian’s union with Christ in His death and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-14).

Romans 6:3-7

3 Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5 For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. 6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.

4. The new life of the Christian (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17; Eph. 4:20-24; Ezek. 36:25-26).

Romans 6:4

4 We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

5. The covenant sign of the believer’s new standing in Christ. (Col. 2:11-15, Ezek. 36:25-27)

Many credobaptists ignore this meaning of baptism because they fear it too closely resembles the arguments of paedobaptists. After all, theologians like A.A. Hodge have written the following:

The Old Testament Church is the same as the New Testament Christian Church... This Church is identically the same with the New Testament Church... as Circumcision signified and bound to precisely what Baptism does; and since Baptism has taken precisely the place of Circumcision—it follows that the church membership of the children of professors should be recognized now as it was then and that they should be baptized.³⁸⁰

While this is some truth to the continuity of the church, it has been pointed out that there are also many stark differences.

³⁸⁰ Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1972), 638.

The pivotal passage that demonstrates the dramatic change between the Old Testament church and the New Testament church is Jeremiah 31:31-34:

Jeremiah 31:31-34

31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. 33 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. 34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' **for they shall all know me**, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Here, it has been pointed out that covenants are not identical, therefore baptism cannot be perfectly identical with circumcision.

Sam Waldron provides a very effective summary of this argument:

The specified difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant prohibits the continuation of infant membership in the covenant. That specified difference is that the people of God in the New Covenant will not break the covenant as Israel did and also that all the New Covenant people of God will know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34). Yes, circumcision was a sign of covenant membership and so also is baptism. We admit also that baptism should be given to all who are members of the New Covenant, to all the true New Testament circumcised. But who are they? Those and those only who know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34), are spiritually circumcised (Philippians 3:3) and born of God (John 1:12, 13), may claim membership in the New Covenant and a right to its sign. The covenant people is no longer a physical, but a spiritual nation (Matthew 21:43). Hence physical bloodlines do not give membership in this nation or permit participation in its covenant signs!

Baptism, therefore, professes what circumcision demanded. Circumcision did demand a new heart, indeed, but it did not profess a new heart. Baptism professes a new heart. Though there is a close relationship between baptism and circumcision, they are not identical. The paedobaptist argument which equates the two ordinances is, therefore, invalid.³⁸¹

Colossians 2:11-13

11 In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, 12 having been buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised him from the dead. 13 And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses

Philippians 3:3

3 For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh

6. The admission of the Christian into the church of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 12:13).

³⁸¹ Samuel E. Waldron, *A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith*, 413.

1 Corinthians 12:13

13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

G.I. Williamson helpfully summarizes the significance of baptism when he writes: “Baptism... simply expresses the verbal content of the gospel in non-verbal form.”³⁸²

Paragraph 2.

Those who do actually profess repentance towards God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ, are the only proper subjects of this ordinance.

Mark 16:16; Acts 8:36,37, 2:41, 8:12, 18:8

Paragraph 3.

The outward element to be used in this ordinance is water, wherein the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Matt. 28:19, 20; Acts 8:38

Paragraph 4.

Immersion, or dipping of the person in water, is necessary to the due administration of this ordinance.

Matt. 3:16; John 3:23

Exposition

When we rightly understand the significance of baptism, this clarifies that only those who have savingly responded to the gospel should participate in this expression of the verbal content of the gospel. Similarly, baptism in the name of the Triune God has been clearly demonstrated.

For the remainder of our study, we will consider the mode of baptism in paragraph 4 of the Confession.

1. The literal meaning of the Greek word for baptism: βαπτίζω (baptizo).

The Greek word baptizo literally means to dip, immerse, submerge, or plunge. Waldron points out that this is literal secular use of the word, the figurative secular use, the literal use in the Septuagint (2 Kings 5:14), the figurative use in the Septuagint (Psalm 69:2), the literal use in the New Testament (see below), and the figurative use in the New Testament (Mark 10:38-39; Luke 12:50; 1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

2. The symbolic representation of the believer’s union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12).

3. The testimony of the New Testament repeatedly points to baptism by immersion.

Matthew 3:15-16

15 But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. 16 And when Jesus was baptized, immediately he went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and

³⁸² G.I. Williamson, *The Westminster Confession of Faith: For Study Classes* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1964), 208.

coming to rest on him; 17 and behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

Mark 1:5, 9-10

5 And all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

9 In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased."

John 3:23

23 John also was baptizing at Aenon near Salim, because water was plentiful there, and people were coming and being baptized

Acts 8:36-39

36 And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See, here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" 38 And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. 39 And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, and the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing. 40 But Philip found himself at Azotus, and as he passed through he preached the gospel to all the towns until he came to Caesarea.

It is therefore evident that the plain teaching of Scripture commends credobaptism by immersion. Yet in our convictions, we should maintain the same mind as the framers of the Confession who confessed the following in the appendix of the 1689 2LCF:

And although we do differ from our brethren who are Paedobaptists; in the subject and administration of Baptisme, and such other circumstances as have a necessary dependence on our observance of that Ordinance, and do frequent our own assemblies for our mutual edification, and discharge of those duties, and services which we owe unto God, and in his fear to each other: yet we would not be from hence misconstrued, as if the discharge of our own consciences herein, did any wayes disoblige or alienate our affections, or conversation from any others that fear the Lord; but that we may and do as we have opportunity partipate of the labors of those, whom God hath indued with abilities above our selves, and qualified, and called to the Ministry of the Word, earnestly desiring to approve our selves to be such, as follow after peace with holyness, and therefore we alwaies keep that blessed Irenicum, or healing Word of the Apostle before our eyes; if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you; nevertheless whereto we have already attained; let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing, Phil 3. v. 15, 16.