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Presbyterianism 101

ALL TO GOD'S GLORY:
Baptism (2)
(WCF 28.3-28.7)

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The Christian Life: Communion

- **New Section of WCF:** Largely focused on the means of grace and the Christian Life
- **Baptism:** solemn admission to the visible church, displays all the benefits of the Covenant
- **Baptism Administration:** water, triune name, authorized minister, covenant community

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Mode of Baptism (28.3)

Dipping of the person into the water is not necessary; but Baptism is rightly administered by pouring or sprinkling water upon the person.

Mode of Baptism (28.3)

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- **Scripture doesn't specify a mode**
 - Reformed: Water in the Triune Name are essential
 - Baptist: Water, Triune Name, and Dunking are essential
- **Message of the Mode**
 - Sprinkling: passive, helpless recipient
 - Immersion: cooperation

Mode of Baptism (28.3)

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- **Textual Concerns:** the meaning of *baptidzo*
 - LXX **Dan 4:33** "body *baptized* [immerse] with the dew of heaven"
 - Greek of Rabbi Ben Sira (Ecclesiasticus 34:30 ca. 150 BC): "He that *washeth* himself after touching the dead, if he toucheth him again, what doth his *washing* avail"
 - Cf. **Num 19:13**, "...water for impurity not *thrown*..."

Mode of Baptism (28.3)

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- **Textual Concerns:** the meaning of *baptidzo*
 - Paul is told to *stand* and be baptized (Ac 9:18)
 - Philippian Jailor baptized "at once" (Ac 16:33)
- **Theological Concerns:** Baptism represents spiritual baptism, which is never conveyed as immersion in OT
 - Isa 52:15, "*sprinkle* many nations"
 - Ezek 36:25ff, "*sprinkle* clean water..."
 - Ac 2:17-18, "I will *pour* out my Spirit on all flesh..."

Mode of Baptism (28.3)

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 - Ac 2:17-18, “I will *pour* out my Spirit on all flesh...”
 - 1 Cor 10, “*baptised* into Moses...”
 - 1 Peter 3, “*baptism*, which corresponds to this...”
 - Mark 7:4 “...do not eat unless they *baptise*...”

Mode of Baptism (28.3)

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- **Logistical Concerns:**
 - Large scale baptism by immersion exceedingly difficult until the 19th Century
 - Immersion Baptism may endanger health for many
- **Redemptive Historical:** Principle of greater simplicity and ease of access under New Covenant by comparison with the Old Covenant

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

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Not only those that do actually profess faith in and obedience unto Christ, but also the infants of one or both believing parents, are to be baptized.

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

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- **Believers:** adult convert who gives a credible profession of faith
- **Children of Believers**
 - Beware arguments from silence
 - The Bible does not explicitly state children are to be baptised, but neither does it exclude them from the Covenant of Grace
 - What is the Nature of Divine Covenants, Signs?

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

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- **The Nature of Divine Covenants:** One Covenant
 - What is communicated (said) in baptism and about whom is it said?
 - If children excluded from Baptism, this is the first time in the history of redemption, the world, humanity that children of believers are excluded
 - God's covenants are imposed on His people
 - cf. Exod 20-24

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

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- **Divine Covenants:** Always Child-Friendly
 - Gen. 9.8-10 "*you and your offspring after you*"
 - Gen. 17.7 "*And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.*"
 - Exod. 2.24 "*And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob.*" (cf. Deut. 29.10-13)
 - Ps. 89.3-4, 18-37 "*I will establish your offspring forever, and build your throne for all generations.*"

God established His Church in the days of Abraham and put children into it. They must remain there until he puts them out. He has nowhere put them out. They are still members of His Church and as such entitled to its ordinances. Among these ordinances is Baptism, which standing in similar place in the New Dispensation to circumcision in the old, is like it to be given to children. - B. B. Warfield

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

- **Nature of the Old Covenant Church:** not that has gone away; OC Church expanded in the NC
 - Gal 3:8-9, *And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed." So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.*
 - Circumcision represents the same grace, binds recipient to profession of same faith as baptism

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

- **Nature of the Old Covenant Church:** not that has gone away; OC Church expanded in the NC
 - **Nature of the New Covenant Church** is the same institution as the OC Church,
 - Simply enlarged with wider access
 - Children were members of the OC Church
- Dt. 29:29** *The secret things belong to the LORD our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever; that we may do all the words of this law*

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

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- **New Testament Treatment of Children**

- Jesus does not send away as outside of Covenant
- Christ and Apostles treat children as having the same relation in the NC church as OC Church
- AA Hodge: The only ground to turn children out of the church would be that Christ explicitly does
- Peter at Pentecost continues the principle of “you and your seed” begun (explicitly) with Abraham

Recipients of Baptism (28.4)

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- **New Testament Treatment of Children**

- Household baptisms: master comes to faith, the whole household is baptised (were there no kids?)
- Paul’s Epistles: addresses children as members of the church and gives them commands on the same basis as their parents (Cf. Colossians, Ephesians)
- Children of one believing parent are said to be holy (also spouses; cf I Cor 7:14)

Importance of Baptism (28.5)

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Although it be a great sin to contemn or neglect this ordinance, yet grace and salvation are not so inseparably annexed unto it, as that no person can be regenerated or saved without it; or, that all that are baptized are undoubtedly regenerated.

Importance of Baptism (28.5)

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- **Reformed Position is Moderate:** minimalist, mediating position
 - No baptismal regeneration
 - Sign of Christian profession, genuineness of grace
- **Not Tied to Administration:** not essential to salvation, but a great sin to neglect it

Efficacy of Baptism (28.6)

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The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time wherein it is administered; yet notwithstanding, by the right use of this ordinance, the grace promised is not only offered, but really exhibited and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age or infants) as that grace belongeth unto, according to the counsel of God's own will, in His appointed time.

Efficacy of Baptism (28.6)

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- **Conveys grace:** to those whom it belongs (just as preaching does);
- Efficacy results from the presence of the Spirit who uses baptism as a means and medium as He chooses

Frequency of Baptism (28.7)

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The sacrament of Baptism is but once to be administered unto any person.

Frequency of Baptism (28.7)

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- **Once and only once**; no scriptural warrant for anabaptism or multiple baptisms
 - Lawfully administered baptism can be administered only once
 - Baptism should be improved by us all lifelong
 - Cf. WLC167
