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Presbyterianism 101

ALL TO GOD'S GLORY:
Sacraments & Baptism (I)
(WCF 27.1-28.3)

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The Christian Life: Communion

- **New Section of WCF:** Largely focused on the means of grace
- **What are Sacraments:** secular word to designate
 - *Sacramentum*: military oath
 - Holy use: rites of entry and fellowship
- **Baptism:** it is both sacrament of initiation and declares what is already true, i.e. membership

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Purpose of Sacraments (27.1)

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, immediately instituted by God, to represent Christ and His benefits; and to confirm our interest in Him; as also, to put a visible difference between those that belong unto the Church, and the rest of the world; and solemnly to engage them to the service of God in Christ, according to His Word.

Purpose of Sacraments (27.1)

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- **Holy Signs and Seals:** what are signs & seals
- **Four Functions of Sacraments**
 - Represent (signify) Christ, His Benefits
 - Confirm (seal) the New Covenant's Benefits
 - Distinguish God's People from the World
 - Engage to the Service of Christ

Purpose of Sacraments (27.1)

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- **Sacraments of NT fulfill the sacraments of the Old Testament**
 - Baptism & Circumcision
 - Lord's Supper & Passover
- **Sacraments Defined:** rite *immediately* instituted by God as Sign and Seal of Covenant of Grace

Sacramental Operations (27.2)

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There is in every sacrament a spiritual relation, or sacramental union, between the sign and the thing signified: whence it comes to pass, that the names and effects of the one are attributed to the other.

Sacramental Operations (27.2)

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- **Relationship:** link between inward/spiritual and the outward/sensible
- **Baptism**
 - Outward: water, and washing in Triune Name
 - Inward: Purification, Holiness, New Birth, etc.
- **Supper**
 - Outward: Bread and Wine broken, poured, eaten
 - Inward: Christ crucified for us, fount of (new) life

Sacramental Operations (27.2)

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- **Union between sign** (bread/wine/water) **and thing signified** (benefits of the Covenant of Grace)
 - Not literally united, but symbolically
 - By Divine appointment, *right* use, grace is actually conveyed in the sacraments
- **Scripture uses signs, seals interchangeably with the Covenant and its benefits**



Sacraments & Spirit (27.3)

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The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them; neither doth the efficacy of a sacrament depend upon the piety or intention of him that doth administer it; but upon the work of the Spirit, and the word of institution, which contains, together with a precept authorizing the use thereof, a promise of benefit to worthy receivers.

Sacraments & Spirit (27.3)

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- **Signs are not inseparable:** no power in the sacrament, but used by the Holy Spirit
 - No benefit to those who “unworthily” received
 - Grace rarely present if reliance is on the sign
- **Elements do not confer grace**
 - Sacrament(s) is/are not a “converting” ordinance
 - Holy Spirit must make effective; HS takes from God, shows to us according to promise of God

Number of Sacraments (27.4)

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There are 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.

Number of Sacraments (27.4)

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- **There are 2 (dos) New Covenant Sacraments**
- **Sacraments administered by a *lawfully* ordained minister of the gospel only**
 - Is this sacramentalism or clericalism?
 - Badges of membership only properly administered by the officers of the Church
 - (See proof texts in WCF)

OC & NC Sacraments (27.5)

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The sacraments of the Old Testament, in regard to the spiritual things thereby signified and exhibited, were, for substance, the same with those of the New.

OC & NC Sacraments (27.5)

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- **Grace in the OC is the same as in the NC**
 - More outward glory / more simplicity
 - More “earthy” / more spiritual
- **Baptism & Circumcision**
- **Lord’s Supper & Passover**

What is Baptism? (28.1)

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Baptism is a sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church; but also, to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in the newness of life. Which sacrament is, by Christ’s own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world.

For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. 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, 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. 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, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. (Col. 2:9-14)

What is Baptism? (28.1)

- **Fullness of Grace signified in Circumcision**
 - God's people called to circumcise hearts
 - Christ "cut off" from the land of the living
 - Abrahamic circumcision confirms promise of blessings to the nation in the "seed"
- **Always call to faith in Christ:** believe the promise
- **Instituted by Christ:** to confirm these graces, mark His people as distinct from the World

What is Baptism? (28.1)

- **Solemn Admission to the Visible Church:** Doesn't make a member; birth or Session do that
 - **Sign and Seal of Covenant of Grace**
 - Validates, points to the gospel
 - Benefits of the gospel listed
- CVD: "Every sacrament has a primary reference to that which is always true and a secondary reference to that which is often true — that which is and that which ought to be"

What is Baptism? (28.1)

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- **Marks a person out as dedicated to God:**
obligation for New Obedience
- **What about Covenant Breakers?**
 - Sacraments are visible word of gospel blessing;
they do not contain what they signify
 - Both Sacraments and Preaching when met with
unbelief confirm the judgment implied

Element of Baptism (28.2)

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The outward element to be used in this sacrament is water, wherewith the party is to be baptized, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, by a minister of the Gospel, lawfully called thereunto.

Element of Baptism (28.2)

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- **How does one baptise?** Water in the Triune Name!
 - Baptisms with other concoctions are not valid
 - Baptise with *ordinary* water (i.e. not flown in from the Jordan River...even if your surname should be *von Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg und Glücksburg!*)
- **Lawfully Ordained Minister**
 - i.e. no “emergency clause”



Mode of Baptism (28.3)

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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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- **Theological Concerns:** Baptism represents spiritual baptism, which is never conveyed as immersion in OT
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 - Ac 2:17-18, “I will *pour* out my Spirit on all flesh...”
 - 1 Cor 10, “baptized into Moses...”
 - 1 Peter 3, “baptism, which corresponds to this...”

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
