

Faith Baptism or Covenant Baptism?

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A controversial issue among Bible-believing Christians is what Scripture teaches regarding the sacrament of baptism. Who are allowed to receive baptism? Is baptism adults-only or children-also?

TERMS

The debate often goes by the name: adult baptism vs. infant baptism. These terms are derived from the *practice* of baptism. However, those arguing “infant baptism” will also baptize adults. And (with the exception maybe of Roman Catholics) neither will baptize “all adults” or “all children”.

It is thus better to use terms that identify where the ways part. The ways part where the *ground* for baptism is concerned. Does one baptize because of *faith* or because of the *covenant*?

Hence we’ll use the terms “Faith Baptism” and “Covenant Baptism”, understanding that those who say “adult baptism” mean “Faith Baptism” and those who say “infant baptism” mean “Covenant Baptism”.

THE CAMPS

While the parties in the debate basically divide into two camps, the picture is actually far more complex.

Faith Baptism

Faith Baptism considers baptism to be the sign (and maybe seal) of *faith*. Baptism is about a human’s commitment to God. The Faith Baptist camp divides into two sub-camps.

- The Arminian defense: faith is an act of man (General Baptists, Seventh Day Adventists, Pentecostals, most Mennonites, Charismatics, ‘evangelical’ congregations)
- The Calvinist defense: faith is the gift of God (Reformed Baptists, ‘evangelical’ congregations, some Mennonites)

Covenant Baptism

Covenant Baptism considers baptism to be the sign and seal of the *covenant*. Baptism is about God’s commitment to man.

Those who defend Covenant Baptism divide into various camps.

- General covenant: Roman Catholics, some Anglicans
- National covenant: most Anglicans, some Calvinists, some Lutherans
- Select covenant: most Lutherans, most Calvinists (Reformed, Presbyterian)

Hybrids

There are also hybrid forms that are difficult to classify. One that stands out in our own (Canadian / United Reformed) tradition is the Kuyperian view of baptism (presumptive regeneration).

Note: The term “presumptive regeneration” is used in the 21st century to denote something that is not identical to “Kuyperian presumptive regeneration”. What is often called “presumptive regeneration” today is better referred to as “presumptive salvation”.

DESCRIPTIONS OF FAITH BAPTISM

Northview Community Church (from northview.org accessed April 22, 2024)

CHRISTIAN BAPTISM

We believe that Christians should be baptized in water upon confession of their faith in Christ. We practice baptism by immersion, although we receive into fellowship those who have been baptized on confession of their faith by another mode. Baptism is a public declaration that the believer identifies with Christ and has become part of His body, the church.

Mt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:2-6; Col. 2:12-13; 1 Thess. 5:23-24; 1 Pet. 3:21

The Mennonite Confession of Faith - 1995

Article 11. Baptism

We believe that the baptism of believers with water is a sign of their cleansing from sin. Baptism is also a pledge before the church of their covenant with God to walk in the way of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are baptized into Christ and his body by the Spirit, water, and blood.

Baptism is a testimony to God's gift of the Holy Spirit and the continuing work of the Spirit in the lives of believers. Through the Spirit we repent and turn toward God in faith. The baptism of the Holy Spirit enables believers to walk in newness of life, to live in community with Christ and the church, to offer Christ's healing and forgiveness to those in need, to witness boldly to the good news of Christ, and to hope in the sharing of Christ's future glory.

Baptism by water is a sign that a person has repented, received forgiveness, renounced evil, and died to sin, (1) through the grace of God in Christ Jesus. Thus cleansed, believers are incorporated into Christ's body on earth, the church. Baptism by water is also a pledge to serve Christ and to minister as a member of his body according to the gifts given to each one. Jesus himself requested water baptism at the beginning of his ministry and sent his followers to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (2) Baptism is done in obedience to Jesus' command and as a public commitment to identify with Jesus Christ, not only in his baptism by water, but in his life in the Spirit and in his death in suffering love.

The baptism of blood, or baptism of suffering, is the offering of one's life, even to death. Jesus understood the giving of his life through the shedding of his blood for others as a baptism. (3) He also spoke about his disciples' suffering and death as a baptism. (4) Those who accept water baptism commit themselves to follow Jesus in giving their lives for others, in loving their enemies, and in renouncing violence, even when it means their own suffering or death.

Christian baptism is for those who confess their sins, repent, accept Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and commit themselves to follow Christ in obedience as members of his body, both giving and receiving care and counsel in the church. Baptism is for those who are of the age of accountability and who freely request baptism on the basis of their response to Jesus Christ in faith. (5)

(1) Rom. 6:1-4; Acts 2:38-39.

(2) Matt. 28:19.

(3) Luke 12:50; 1 John 5:7-8.

(4) Mark 10:38.

(5) Matt. 28:19-20; John 4:1; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:27.

DESCRIPTIONS OF COVENANT BAPTISM

Liturgical Form for Baptism – Canadian Reformed Church (canrc.org)

First, we and our children are conceived and born in sin and are therefore by nature children of wrath, so that we cannot enter the kingdom of God unless we are born again. This is what the immersion in or sprinkling with water teaches us. It signifies the impurity of our souls, so that we may detest ourselves, humble ourselves before God, and seek our cleansing and salvation outside of ourselves.

Second, baptism signifies and seals to us the washing away of our sins through Jesus Christ. We are, therefore, baptized into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. ...

Third, since every covenant contains two parts, a promise and an obligation, we are, through baptism, called and obliged by the Lord to a new obedience. We are to cleave to this one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to trust him, and to love him with our whole heart, soul, and mind, and with all our strength. We must not love the world but put off our old nature and lead a God-fearing life. And if we sometimes through weakness fall into sins, we must not despair of God's mercy nor continue in sin, for baptism is a seal and trustworthy testimony that we have an eternal covenant with God.

The Belgic Confession of Faith – 1561

The Sacrament of Baptism

We believe and confess that Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law (Rom 10:4), has by his shed blood put an end to every other shedding of blood that one could or would make as an expiation or satisfaction for sins. He has abolished circumcision, which involved blood, and has instituted in its place the sacrament of baptism.¹ By baptism we are received into the church of God and set apart from all other peoples and false religions, to be entirely committed to him² whose mark and emblem we bear. This serves as a testimony to us that he will be our God and gracious Father forever.

For that reason he has commanded all those who are his to be baptized with plain water into *the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit* (Mt 28:19). By this he signifies to us that as water washes away the dirt of the body when poured on us, and as water is seen on the body of the baptized when sprinkled on him, so the blood of Christ, by the Holy Spirit, does the same thing internally to the soul.³ It washes and cleanses our soul from sin⁴ and regenerates us from children of wrath into children of God.⁵ This is not brought about by the water as such⁶ but by the sprinkling of the precious blood of the Son of God,⁷ which is our Red Sea,⁸ through which we must pass to escape the tyranny of Pharaoh, that is, the devil, and enter into the spiritual land of Canaan.

Thus the ministers on their part give us the sacrament and what is visible, but our Lord gives us what is signified by the sacrament, namely, the invisible gifts and grace. He washes, purges, and cleanses our souls of all filth and unrighteousness,⁹ renews our hearts and fills them with all comfort, gives us true assurance of his fatherly goodness, clothes us with the new nature, and takes away the old nature with all its works.¹⁰

We believe, therefore, that anyone who aspires to eternal life ought to be baptized only once.¹¹ Baptism should never be repeated, for we cannot be born twice. Moreover, baptism benefits us not only when the water is on us and when we receive it, but throughout our whole life. For that reason we reject the error of the Anabaptists, who are not content with a single baptism received only once, and who also condemn the baptism of the little children of believers. We believe that these children ought to be baptized and sealed with the sign of the covenant, as infants were circumcised in Israel on the basis of the same promises which are now made to our children.¹² Indeed, Christ shed his blood to wash the children of believers just as much as he shed it for adults.¹³ Therefore they ought to receive the sign and sacrament of what Christ has done for them, as the Lord commanded in the law that a lamb was to be offered shortly after children were born.¹⁴ This was a sacrament of the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Because baptism has the same significance for our children as circumcision had for the people of Israel, Paul calls

baptism *the circumcision of Christ* (Col 2:11).

¹ Col 2:11. ² Ex 12:48; 1 Pet 2:9. ³ Mt 3:11; 1 Cor 12:13. ⁴ Acts 22:16; Heb 9:14; 1 Jn 1:7; Rev 1:5b. ⁵ Tit 3:5. ⁶ 1 Pet 3:21. ⁷ Rom 6:3; 1 Pet 1:2; 2:24. ⁸ 1 Cor 10:1-4. ⁹ 1 Cor 6:11; Eph 5:26. ¹⁰ Rom 6:4; Gal 3:27. ¹¹ Mt 28:19; Eph 4:5. ¹² Gen 17:10-12; Mt 19:14; Acts 2:39. ¹³ 1 Cor 7:14. ¹⁴ Lev 12:6.

MAIN POINTS OF DISCUSSION

	Faith Baptism	Covenant Baptism	Texts / proofs
A	Baptism does not replace circumcision	Baptism replaces circumcision	Col 2:11-12
B	The house texts prove only adults were baptized	The house texts prove children also were baptized	Acts 10:2; 16:15; 16:33; 1 Cor 1:16
C	Jesus blessing children does not prove infant baptism, it does prove God cares about children	Jesus blessing children proves infant baptism	Mat 19:14; Mk 10:16
D	Nowhere does Scripture command the baptism of children	Nowhere does Scripture forbid the baptism of children	
E	An essential condition for baptism is faith	An essential condition for baptism is covenant	Mk 16:16; Gen. 17
F	There are two covenants	There is one covenant	Gen 15, 17; Acts. 2:38-41
G	God relates to individuals directly (God has no 'grandchildren')	God works through the generations	Gen 17:7; 1 Cor 7:14
H	Baptism ought to be by immersion	Baptism can be by immersion or sprinkling	Rom 6; the Greek word 'baptizoo'
I	Baptism can be repeated	Baptism is once only	The nature of the ground of baptism (faith / covenant)

Preliminary comment

The strength of an argument depends on: (1) the truth value of the premises and (2) the validity of the argument. Only if the premises are true and the argument is valid, will the conclusion stand.

The following paper uses syllogisms – a 'mathematical' way of presenting an argument. The symbol ∴ means "therefore" and indicates the conclusion of an argument.

The following argument is valid but one of its premises is false, hence the conclusion is false.

- a. Money grows on trees
 - b. Everyone can pick trees clean
 - ∴ Everyone can be rich
- No, money doesn't grow on trees*

The following argument has true premises but the argument is not valid, hence the conclusion is false.

- a. Rain makes the ground wet
 - b. The ground is wet
 - ∴ It is raining.
- No, it could also be a sprinkler that is making the ground wet, or a flash flood, or...*

A. *Baptism and Circumcision*

Even within Calvinist circles the exegesis (explanation) of Colossians 2:11-12 will vary. This is already an indicator that this text cannot serve as a strong proof. The fact that it is the only text considered to prove that baptism replaces circumcision weakens this argument in favour of Covenant Baptism even further.

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|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) The argument tends to be: | (2) The argument should be |
| a. Baptism replaces circumcision | a. Infants can be baptized |
| b. Infants were circumcised | b. Infants were circumcised |
| ∴ c. Infants can be baptized | ∴ c. Baptism replaces circumcision |

Of course, more needs to be said for (2) to be valid – (2a) needs proof. The point right now is to indicate that “baptism replaces circumcision” is not a “starting premise” but a “conclusion”.

Note: our Form for Infant Baptism takes approach (1) while the Belgic Confession and Heidelberg Catechism take approach (2).

Conclusion: Discussing A is not helpful in this debate

B. *The house texts*

None of the so-called “house texts” mention that children were present when “the whole household” was baptized. They also do not state that children were *not* present. Thus the house texts *prove* nothing.

Whether children were present would be determined by one’s view of baptism. The reasoning is actually as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| For Faith Baptism: | For Covenant Baptism |
| a. Only adults can be baptized | a. All covenant members can be baptized |
| b. Whole households were baptized | b. Whole households were baptized |
| ∴ c. These households did not include children | ∴ c. These households could have included children |

So like A, the problem here is that the view of the house texts is a *conclusion*, not a *starting point*.

Conclusion: Discussing B is not helpful in this debate.

C. *The blessing by Christ*

Jesus blessing the little children is considered proof by both sides that God cares about infants too. There’s no debate there.

But *how* does God care about them? Arminian Faith Baptists, who tend towards universal atonement, will argue that all children are saved as long as they are not capable of the act of believing. Calvinist Faith Baptists and Covenant Baptists will argue salvation is only certain¹ for children of believing parents (Canons of Dort I.17).

The problem here is how one connects “the kingdom of heaven belongs to children” to baptism. For the Covenant Baptism side, the fact that this text proves infant baptism is a conclusion based on the premise that *presumes* baptism connects with “covenant” and not with “faith” (only).

For Covenant Baptism

¹ Judgment is reserved on children of unbelieving parents. Are all condemned? Are all saved? Are some saved and some condemned? Only God knows.

- a. Possessing the kingdom = being in the covenant
- b. Children possess the kingdom
- ∴ c. Children are in the covenant
- d. Baptism is about being in the covenant
- ∴ e. Children are to be baptized

Faith Baptism will agree with (a), may agree with (b), will dispute (d) and thus always dispute (e).
Conclusion: C is not helpful in this debate.

Note: one might think that the logical position of "Faith Baptism" is that children, as long as they do not believe, are condemned. That position is rarely defended. However, it is true that as children grow older (and more capable of believing) the pressure on them to believe increases. This is why "adult baptisms" at times happen at a very young age. For, if you have the ability to believe but don't, you will perish eternally.

D. No command to baptize children, no prohibition to baptize children

This argument is an example of the logical fallacy called "argument from silence".² The argument is actually only as strong as the premise that something would have been said if the opposite was the case.

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. For Faith Baptism: a. The Bible does not command the baptism of infants b. The Bible would say so if it were so ∴ c. Infants should not be baptized | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2. For Covenant Baptism a. The Bible does not prohibit the baptism of infants b. The Bible would say so if it were so ∴ c. Infants should be baptized |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

In both situations (b) is not going to convince the other side.

While not conclusive, the Covenant Baptism position is stronger, provided one accepts the Covenant Baptism premise that baptism relates to "covenant" and not to "faith" (only), or one presumes that circumcision and baptism are the same thing in different eras. For then the argument is as follows:

- 3. For Covenant Baptism
- a. Infants were members of the covenant and thus circumcised
- b. Baptism is the same as circumcision, both are sign and seal of the covenant
- c. The Bible would say something if the position of children in the covenant changed
- ∴ d. Infants should be baptized

The problem here is that a Faith Baptist will not accept premise (3b)

Conclusion: D is not helpful in this debate.

² Archaeologists will say: absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. E.g. not finding evidence of King David does not mean that there never was a King David.

E. Does baptism relate to faith or covenant?

E1. Faith Baptism argues that, when Scripture speaks of faith (believing) and baptism, Scripture indicates an *order*. The peoples are made disciples and *then* are baptized (Matthew 28:19). One believes and *then* is baptized (Mark 16:16). You repent and *then* are baptized (Acts 2:38). The accounts that involve baptism indicate there is first a confession of faith and *then* there is baptism (e.g. Acts 8:36-38).

E2. Covenant Baptism argues that Scripture indicates baptism is sign and seal of the covenant. By “covenant” they understand the promise of God to be God to man. God, being sovereign, does not require a reaction from man to enter into a covenantal relationship with man (Genesis 17). God’s promise is to His people *and their children* (Acts 2:39). Also the children of believers are sanctified (1 Corinthians 7:14); that’s ‘positional sanctification’, being ‘holy’ as in ‘set apart to God’.

An objection to E1 is that none of the texts referenced have the word “then”. One is pressing the texts to claim they express a chronological order. It is true that there is a chronological order in the accounts of actual baptisms. However, in these situations the named individual being baptized was an adult. Covenant Baptism does not deny that, where adults are concerned, a profession of faith is required.

An objection to E2 is the view that there is not one covenant but two. That’s point F.

F. Two covenants or one?

The Arminian version of Faith Baptism argues there are two covenants, not one. The first covenant is the covenant with Israel, which began with Abraham (Genesis 12:2; Genesis 15). The second covenant is the covenant with believers, which also began with Abraham (Genesis 12:3; Genesis 17:1-6). The sign of the first covenant is circumcision (Genesis 17:7-14). The sign of the second covenant is baptism (Acts 2:38-41). You are a member of the first covenant if you are physically linked to Abraham—if you are an Israelite. You are a member of the second covenant if you are spiritually linked to Christ—if you believe. As children cannot believe, they are not linked to Christ by faith, and thus are not part of the second covenant.

Covenant Baptism argues there is one covenant. This covenant has two phases or eras, which are known as the “old” and “new” or “first” and “second” (cf. Hebrews 8:13). While there are differences between the old and new covenants, there is continuity in that God’s covenantal promise does not change: “I will be your God”. As there is, essentially one covenant, everything that applies in the old covenant applies in the new, unless there are clear instructions or examples to the contrary.

This means (among others):

1. circumcision is no longer the sign and seal of the covenant (Galatians 5:6)
2. baptism is the sign and seal of the covenant (Acts 2:38-39)
3. the sign of the covenant is no longer restricted to males (Acts 16:15)

One finds the debate between Faith Baptism and Covenant Baptism is determined for the most part with the view one has of the covenants.

Those who, like the Anabaptists of the 16th century, disparage the Old Testament (today: conservative Mennonites and Dispensationalists) will argue in favour of Faith Baptism.

Those who, like the Romanists, Lutherans, and Calvinists of the 16th century, emphasize the unity of the Testaments will argue in favour of Covenant Baptism.

E&F – Variants

As a debate develops, there's usually some truth on both sides. And because there's some truth on both sides, a debate will help to filter out that truth and help one in figuring out how to make a single sense of that truth.

That applies also to the Faith Baptism – Covenant Baptism debate. As a result, over the course of time hybrid positions developed which include elements of both sides.

The following three are worth noting as they are 'close' to the most commonly held position in Canadian Reformed circles.

Reformed Baptists

Reformed Baptists argue in favour of the unity of the covenant. However, they presume that baptism is not a sign and seal of the promise (of God), but that it is a sign (and seal) of repentance and faith (God's gift to man). Only when there is evidence of initial conversion and faith, can there be baptism.

Kuyperians

Abraham Kuyper was also convinced that conversion and faith need to be present for baptism to take place. However, he argued that there did not need to be *evidence* of conversion and faith. He said one could baptize on the *presumption that a child was regenerated*. That *presumption* was based on the *covenant*: it was safe to presume that the child of believing parents was a regenerate child. A logical conclusion of this approach was that only if an individual indeed proved to be regenerated later in life was the baptism a true baptism and not a "spilling/playing with water".

Note: this approach undermined the spiritual value of baptism, saw many reflect on the doctrine of baptism and covenant, and eventually led to the Liberation of 1944, a church schism that created the "liberated Reformed" churches, from which came the Canadian Reformed Churches and the Free Reformed Churches of Australia and of South Africa.

Hyper-Calvinists³

Some Calvinists, not so keen about the idea of some baptisms being "pretend" argue that "baptism" is not a sign and seal of a *personal* promise but of a *community* promise. The baptism of children indicates that also children can be saved.

Note: The problem here is that covenant and election are equated, while they are two different things.

Schilderians

Note: The opponents of both Kuyper and Hyper-Calvinists were led by Schilder. Schilder stands at the 'start' of the 'liberated Reformed', which includes the Canadian Reformed Churches. This paper is basically arguing the Schilderian view.

Schilderians are often accused of defending 'covenant automatism', one might say "presumptive salvation". This is the idea that "if you are in the covenant you are saved." Often it is stated as follows: if you are baptized, you are saved.

It is true that this line of thought often exists among the Canadian Reformed. However, this is not what Schilderians teach. Schilderians teach: "If you are baptized, you have the promise of God. Believe that promise. It is your salvation." Schilderians do not deny the necessity of faith. Their position is nuanced to allow for the fact that faith is *commensurate with ability*: *God requires no more than you are capable of.*

³ The term 'hyper-Calvinists' refers to Calvinists who are 'extreme' in emphasizing the sovereignty of God at the expense of man's responsibility. In North America: among others the Netherlands Reformed Congregations (NRC), the Reformed Congregations in North America (RCNA) and the Protestant Reformed Churches (PRC). The Protestant Reformed Churches consider the Canadian Reformed Churches "Arminian".

Kuyperians, Schilderians, and Hyper-Calvinists

Kuyperians: Baptism is a sign and seal of the reality of salvation. Hence: "Is your baptism real?"

The central thought is: "Do you believe?"

Schilderians: Baptism is a sign and seal of the reality of God's promise. Hence: "Baptism is always real."

The central thought is: "Believe!"

Hyper-Calvinists: Baptism is a sign and seal of the possibility of salvation. Hence: "Baptism is always real."

The central thought is: "Are you chosen?"

G. God's grandchildren?

It is often thought – by proponents and opponents alike – that Covenant Baptism argues that children are in the covenant *because* of the faith of their parents. This has some people say: believing parents are God's children and therefore their children are God's "grandchildren".

The problem is that this view presumes that somehow faith needs to be a ground for baptism. If it's not the faith of the child, then it must be the faith of the parents.

But the covenant is a covenant of grace: 100% grace. Faith is not a requirement to be in the covenant. Faith is the call of the covenant.

The faith of parents does not MAKE their infant a covenant child. The faith of parents are an INDICATION their infant is a covenant child (especially 1Corinthians 7:14).

H. Immersion only?

Faith Baptists often think (thought) that Covenant Baptists only allow baptism by sprinkling. Faith Baptists believe that Romans 6 demands baptism by immersion.

Covenant Baptism is fine with either mode of baptism. Baptism by immersion of adults frequently happens in Calvinist church in warmer countries. However, it is not a requirement. The word "baptizo" has a range of meanings from "become wet" to "be dunked under".

On the other hand, the symbolism of being buried by baptism should be clear to all. The Flood in Noah's days and the passage through the Red Sea are compared with baptism in Scripture. So it's wise for Covenant Baptists to be generous with the water.⁴

I. The repetition of baptism

If baptism is viewed strictly as a sign and seal of man's faith, a work of man, it makes sense to allow for multiple baptisms. For (to the Arminian way of thinking) there are people who fall from the faith and return to the faith.

Note: it also makes sense for Faith Baptists to demand the baptism of those who were baptized as infants. After all, that baptism, to their way of thinking, was not a proper baptism.

If baptism is viewed strictly as a sign and seal of God's promise, it makes sense to refuse a repetition of baptism. For God does not recant, ever, not even when man is disobedient.

Note: there is debate as to when exactly a baptism does and does not qualify as a proper baptism. In Latin American nations the point of debate is especially whether or not to recognize baptisms administered by the Roman Catholic Church. Roman Catholicism is so strong on Mariology that its baptism can hardly be considered baptism into the Trinity.

Finally, Covenant Baptists also see the Lord's Supper as a sign and seal of the covenant. For most Covenant Baptists the Lord's Supper includes the expression by man of his faith in God. That's why this

⁴ That's why I baptize with a waterfall ☺.

sacrament is repeated (faith needs strengthening). That's also why infants can be baptized but cannot partake of the Lord's Supper until they profess their faith.

ADULT BAPTISM

Covenant Baptists will only baptize adults upon public profession of faith. Within Calvinist circles there are different opinions as to what such public profession of faith should include. Some churches place baptism midway a period of personal instruction. Others (like the Canadian Reformed) administer baptism following the period of personal instruction. It is argued that if the 'standard' is lowered for outsiders, it should also be lowered for 'insiders'. We do see this tendency among Reformed churches, even in our own. While (in the Willoughby Heights CanRC) one has to complete 6 years of catechism instruction, as of recently public profession of faith can happen prior to the completion of those 6 years.

PUBLIC PROFESSION OF FAITH

In Canadian Reformed Churches, public profession of faith is not regarded to be a sacrament. It has been called "Response to Your Baptism" and the liturgical form notes it gives access to the Lord's Supper. It is an event *between* the sacraments.

It could be argued, though, that public profession of faith by an individual baptized as an infant is the final act of the sacrament of baptism. Where an adult comes to God, the order is: faith – baptism – Lord's Supper. Where a child of believing parents comes to God, the order is: baptism – faith – Lord's Supper.

IN CONCLUSION

The debate between Faith Baptism and Covenant Baptism is not simply about some Bible texts. It's connected to how you see the interaction between God and man (the Arminian approach or the Calvinist approach). It's also about how you see baptism (a statement by man to God or a statement by God to man).

The doctrine of baptism (and the Lord's Supper) are conclusions or consequences of a certain system of doctrine. Usually the systems of doctrine are very complex and it isn't until one comes to the practice of the sacraments that the differences become clear. It's noteworthy that what most divides Christianity relates to the sacraments. That's why the sacraments are considered a mark by which to distinguish a church faithful to God and His Word from a church not faithful to God and His Word.

SOME LITERATURE

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