

- o We have examined the paedobaptist arguments for infant baptism and found them unconvincing, defective, and against the biblical teaching on baptism. Our Catechism states the following:
  - To whom is baptism to be administered?
    - : Baptism is to be administered to all those who credibly profess repentance towards God, faith in and obedience to our Lord Jesus Christ, and to none other.
  - Are infants of professing believers to be baptized?
    - : The infants of professing believers are not to be baptized, because there is neither command nor example in the Holy Scriptures, nor certain inference from them, to baptize such.
  - How is baptism rightly administered?
    - : Baptism is rightly administered by immersion, or dipping the whole body of the believer in water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, according to Christ's institution, and the practice of thee apostles, and not by sprinkling or pouring of water, or dipping some part of the body, after the tradition of men.
- = Practical problems are to be solved by applying the truth, not by adjusting the truth.

### **I. Baptism and church membership.**

1. There have been disagreements among Christians on the subject, mode, and meaning of baptism but there has never been disagreement about the purpose of baptism, which is to incorporate the person baptised into the membership of the local church.
  - As a norm, baptism makes the person a member of the local church. There are exceptional occasions when we baptize someone without accepting the person into membership (cf Acts 8:26ff.). Those who have been baptised correctly in another church may be accepted into membership in our church without having to be baptised again.
  - We believe in the gathered church principle, i.e. that the local church is: (i) to be made up of baptized believers, (ii) who voluntarily covenant together, (iii) to worship and serve God in accordance to the Bible's teaching.
2. Issues concerning baptism and church membership include the following:
  - (i) If there is no Reformed Baptist church within reasonable distance, do I worship in a reformed Presbyterian church instead of an Arminian Baptist church?
    - : Yes, I would, for we share so much in common with another reformed church, including the authority of Scripture, the regulative principle of worship, the primacy of preaching, etc.
    - : Wouldn't the paedobaptist church try aggressively to convert you to become a paedobaptist? No, if its leadership is spiritually mature. If it does, I will inform my home church and also register an official protest. If that persists, I will leave the church.
  - (ii) Would I become a member of a reformed paedobaptist (Presbyterian, Independent, etc) church?
    - : No, for membership is a covenant commitment, and I do not want to be giving my all to build up a church which I cannot fully agree with. Disagreement on infant baptism does not prevent me from fellowship with paedobaptists, but it is serious enough an error to be upheld and propagated by a church.
    - : In the long term, I would consider starting a Reformed Baptist church in the locality, under the supervision of my home church, or a RBC nearest to me. I do not want my children to grow up in a church which practises infant baptism and assume all children of believers are "covenant children."
  - (iii) Shouldn't we have an associate membership in our church for reformed paedobaptists?
    - : No, for conditions would have to be imposed upon such "associate members" such as they are not allowed to vote, or to hold office. This would lead to a class of "members" who are not truly members, since they do not share in the full privileges, responsibilities and liabilities of church membership.
  - (iv) Would our church accept into membership a believer who was sprinkled in another church?
    - : No, until they are baptised biblically. "For thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt. 3:15).
    - : "Moreover, we are Baptists, and we cannot swerve from this matter of discipline, nor can we make our church half-and-half in that matter. The witness of our church must be one and indivisible. We must have one Lord, one faith, and one baptism." (CH Spurgeon)

## II. Baptism and the Lord's supper.

1. The biblical order is clear: baptism must come first, followed by the Lord's supper (Mt 28:18-20; Acts 2:42).
  - Three approaches have been adopted by churches regarding the Lord's supper.
    - : (i) Open communion, in which all who desire may take the Lord's supper.
    - : (ii) Closed communion, in which only baptised believers who are members of the same church or denomination may take part.
    - : (iii) Restricted communion, in which baptised believers from any church may take part, and paedobaptist visitors are invited to take part.
2. We practise closed membership and restricted communion. (CH Spurgeon did the same.) One purpose of the Lord's supper is to express our spiritual fellowship in Christ. Since we are in fellowship with paedobaptist brethren, we invite them to join us at the Lord's table.
  - What if the paedobaptist believer is not a visitor, but a long-term adherent? We leave it to his conscience to decide.

## III. Baptism and minors.

1. There is always the problem of "the second generation." Some Baptist churches baptize children of believers who have arrived at age 12 years old. That is nothing but "delayed infant baptism," which should not be entertained.
    - Some Reformed Baptist churches do not baptize minors by arguing that there is no recorded instance of such baptism in the Bible. While this may be true, it is not the proper place to begin. It leads to too restricted a view of church membership, while the paedobaptist view of "covenant children" would be too broad.
      - : The principle of the gathered church requires that we do not withhold baptism and membership from those who manifest a credible profession of faith. The difficulty in determining the child's credibility of profession requires that the church waits for him to reach adolescence before he is baptised.
  2. The next question is whether an adolescent member should share in all the responsibilities and liabilities of membership.
    - Since he is a member, he has in principle the right to all these. Having *rights* is one thing, the *exercise* of those rights is another. The exercise of those rights will have to be regulated by the office-bearers in conjunction with the church, and in consultation with the believing parents.
      - : Children mature at different ages. No fixed age should be set for children to be assigned any responsibility.
- = Be rightly proud to be a Reformed Baptist. (One can be wrongly proud!) Help to strengthen Reformed Baptist churches. Seek to plant one in conjunction with your home church or a RBC near to you.
- : Sad to say, a church may claim itself to be RB, upholding the 1689 Confession, but be astray in worship or have a bad spirit. In such cases, it would be better to worship in a reformed paedobaptist church, or other evangelical church (Eph 4:1-6; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15).