

Church Sacraments / Ordinances

Pastor Mark Blair
BICF ZGC JTC
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Roman Catholic

Sacerdotalism

Sacerdotalism – Roman Catholics believe sacraments have the power to actually convey the blessings they signify. So, the sacrament itself has the power to confer the grace which it signifies. Process is something automatic – *‘ex opere operato’* - from the very act of participating in the sacrament.

The Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic Church

I. **Baptism** Sacrament of Baptism is the beginning of supernatural life. When the sacrament is administered, original sin disappears as God becomes present in the soul, the soul shares God’s own life, sanctifying grace. Justification is conferred in Baptism.

II. **Confession** Sacrament of Reconciliation - the priest, as the agent of God, forgives sins committed after Baptism, when the sinner is heartily sorry for them, sincerely confesses them, and is willing to make satisfaction for them.

III. **Eucharist** Holy Eucharist is both a sacrifice and a sacrament. The Mass is a divine action in which Jesus, through the agency of the human priest, changes the bread and wine into His own Body and Blood and continues through time the offering which He made to God on Calvary—the offering of Himself for mankind. The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice, a continuing sacrifice. The sacrifice of the Eucharist is truly propitiatory.

IV. **Confirmation** Confirmation’s purpose is to perfect in us that which was begun in Baptism. We are baptized in order to be confirmed, to receive the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

V. **Marriage** God founded the institution of marriage to ensure the right use of the procreative power: the lifelong and irrevocable union of one man and one woman. Jesus made marriage a sacrament, a conveyor of grace, the sacrament of Matrimony among Christians.

VI. **Holy Orders** Holy Orders creates a priest. Holy Orders can be administered only by a bishop. Only a bishop has the power to ordain priests. The second way in which Holy Orders differs from other sacraments is that Holy Orders is not received all at once.

VII. **Anointing of the Sick (Extreme Unction)** “the conferral of a special grace on the Christian experiencing the difficulties inherent in the condition of grave illness or old age.”

Roman Catholic Catechism

Protestants have only 2 sacraments because of Jesus’ commands and the practice of the apostles in the early church. Jesus tells the disciples to baptize “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28.19) and his final meal ended with a command: “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22.19)

The two sacraments symbolize the whole of our Christian life. Baptism symbolizes our entering into God’s covenant and salvation and the way that we enter. The Lord’s Supper symbolizes our life within that covenant as we enjoy and live out the salvation He has freely given us. There is no need or place, therefore, for other sacraments, for there is nothing else to symbolize, they give a united testimony to Christ. Together they say it is all of Him, through Him, by Him, and in Him - that without Him we are nothing and have nothing.

Protestant Reformed Church confession

Roman Catholic

Protestants

Sacerdotalism

Memorialism

Memorialism – Many Protestant hold this view that sacraments have no real power, but are merely memorials/ordinances, object lessons, which teach something about God. This view arose in opposition to the Catholic view. Baptism, then, is not a means by which God conveys grace, but is a testimony of a person who has believed. It is a sign, but not a seal. Where sacraments revolve around what God does, ordinances revolve around what man does and what God did.



Huldrych Zwingli, Huldrych also spelled Ulrich, (born Jan. 1, 1484, Wildhaus in the Toggenburg, Sankt Gallen, Switz.—died Oct. 11, 1531, near Kappel), the most important reformer in the Swiss Protestant Reformation and the only major reformer of the 16th century whose movement did not evolve into a church.

“Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer’s faith in a crucified buried and risen Saviour, the believer’s death to sin the burial of the old life and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord’s Supper.” Canadian Convention of Southern Baptists

“When reduced to merely an ordinance, baptism and communion are no longer about what God does, but what man does. There is nothing supernatural occurring, as if the supernatural realm were off limits to the Creator of the universe, God merely observes as we commemorate His work. An ordinance is actor-centered.”
David Heddle

Roman Catholic

Reformed

Protestants

Sacerdotalism

Sign and Seal

Memorialism

Reformed Position - There is a sacramental union (or spiritual relationship) between the sign and the thing signified. More than merely signifying something, both sacraments actually convey grace. So, when a sacrament is properly administered and received, there is a real and effectual promise attached to it. The effect that will be derived from the act will be from God alone. Baptism does not remove sin or convey salvation, but there is great spiritual advantage to being baptized and participating in the Lord’s Supper. But the Reformers disagreed on how Jesus is present in the sacraments, especially the sacrament of communion.

Luther

Consubstantiation

Real Presence



Martin Luther (1483-1546) was a German professor of theology, composer, priest, monk, and a seminal figure in the Protestant Reformation.

Lutheran view is midway between the Roman Catholic and the Reformed.

Lutherans teach that in the sacrament Jesus' physical body is "in, with, and under" the bread and the wine. The elements are still bread and wine, but Jesus' body and blood are there, too.

They deny the Roman Catholic idea of the sacrament as a continuing sacrifice, but emphasis on a literal physical presence of Christ can dilute the biblical emphasis on receiving Christ by faith alone.

Luther

Calvin

Zwingli

Consubstantiation

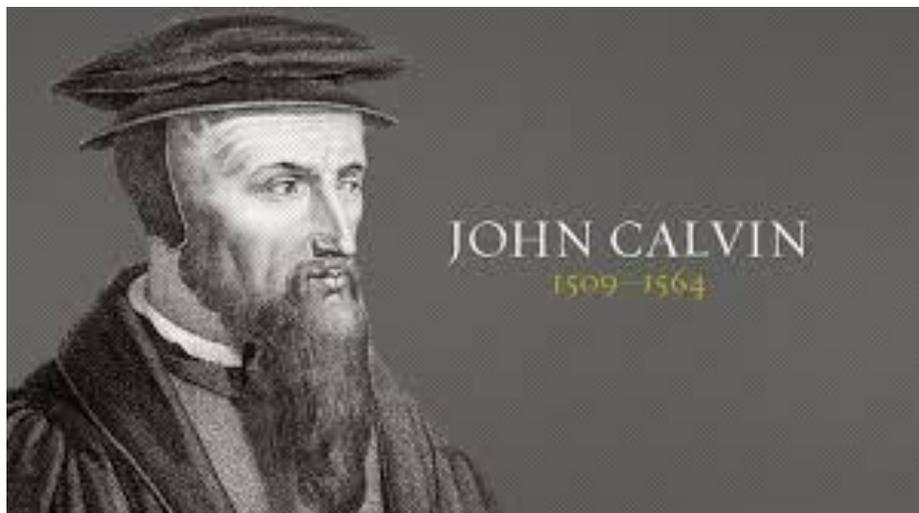
Heavenly Communion

Memorial

Real Presence

Risen with Christ

Sign



French Jean Calvin, or Cauvin, (born July 10, 1509, Noyon, Picardy, France—died May 27, 1564, Geneva, Switzerland), theologian and ecclesiastical statesman. He was the leading French Protestant Reformer and the most important figure in the second generation of the Protestant Reformation.

Supper is not a mere memorial, but a means of grace.

Scripture is clear that there is no continuing sacrifice and cannot be. Jesus' atonement is final and complete. There is no other sacrifice for sins. It needs no continuation, repetition, or supplementation.

When Jesus said to his disciples, "This is my body," he cannot have meant that the bread and wine on the table were his literal body, for his literal body was behind the table, not on it. Rather, what he plainly meant was that the bread and wine represent his body and blood.

Like a professor pointing to a map and saying, "This is France." He doesn't mean that the map is literally France, but that the picture represents France.

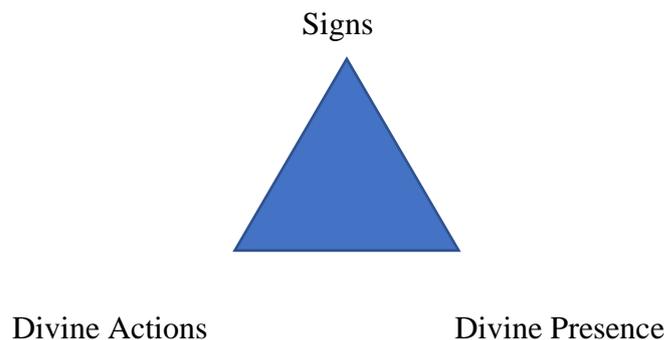
Physical body of Christ is in heaven not on earth, but Christ is present in the Spirit, so we "participate" in his body and blood" (1 Corinthians 10:16-18)

We "feed" on Him in our hearts by faith in heavenly places. Benefits come by faith alone. (John 6:53- 58)

Most Reformers have followed Calvin's view of the Lord's Supper.

General Observations about Sacraments

Sacraments are holy signs and seals of the covenant of grace, instituted by God, to represent Christ, and his benefits.



1. **Signs** - Authoritative, divine communications, revelations to us. Sacraments symbolize the gospel and teach us authoritatively what the gospel is, not by words, but by pictures and actions. So the fullness of divine teaching is by Word and sacrament.

Sacraments are visible words; the Word of God by divinely authorized dramatic images. In Baptism we feel the waters that symbolize forgiveness and cleansing. In the Lord's Supper we taste, smell, touch the elements of our communion with the Risen Lord who gave Himself for our redemption.

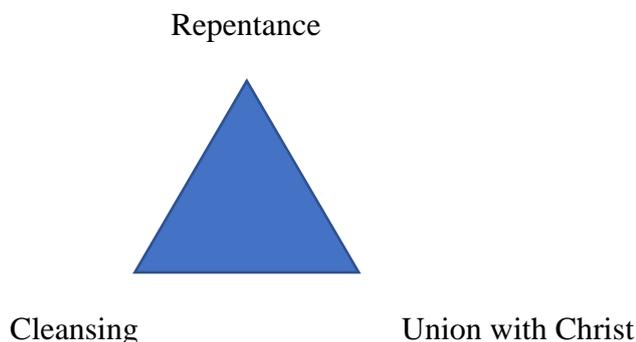
2. **God's Actions** on our behalf. He is doing something for us. He is really there, present, acting. Sacraments are also seals, like a government seal on your birth certificate. You are an official citizen of God's Kingdom, with all rights and privileges.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are seals of God's covenant of grace with us in Christ. Abraham's circumcision was a seal of his righteousness of faith (Rom. 4:11). As seals, the sacraments confirm and guarantee the covenant promises. Sacraments are visible words; as Scripture guarantees the promises of God, so do Sacraments. They separate us from the world, locating us in the people of God.

3. **Locations of God 's Presence.** God is doing something for us in and through Sacrament. He is Present. We experience a communion of the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10.16) - "communion" KJV, "participation" ESV, - koinonia "fellowship." In his intimate presence, God helps us to grow in faith. Growth comes thru Presence of Christ by his Spirit dealing with us personally. Value of the sacrament is by faith alone. Without faith, it is an empty symbol.

Baptism

Baptism is, first, the rite of entrance into the visible church. As a person takes an oath of citizenship, so baptism is path to membership of the Christian church. Baptism gives us the right to be recognized as Christians. In the face of doubt and temptation, Martin Luther would shout, "I am baptized!" Baptism gives us the right to be part of the great work that God is doing through his church.



1. **Cleansing.** Like the OT ceremonial washings (Leviticus 8.5- 6; 14.8- 9, 15- 16), baptism is a requirement for entering God's presence. Baptism symbolizes cleansing from sin - it pictures forgiveness. Baptism, as a sacrament, pictures the gospel, and the gospel - about the forgiveness of sins. Scripture does not say baptism is the new birth, or forgiveness comes through baptism. Not everybody who is baptized is cleansed or forgiven from sin.

2. **Repentance.** Baptism represents repentance, as in the early ministry of John (Matthew 3.6-11). We must recognize that we are in need of God's cleansing, that we are sinners. Baptized person confesses their own sin, turns from it, and asks God 's forgiveness. In churches where infants are baptized, the parents make this confession on behalf of their children. To accept baptism represents the demand of God 's law on us.

3. **Union with Christ.** We are baptized "into the name of" the Trinity (Matthew 28.19), and the "name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 2.38). Baptized into the name of someone is to belong to that person. (1 Corinthians 1.13,15; 10.2, 12.13; Romans 6.3; Galatians 3.27-28; Colossians 2.11- 12). Baptism is a name-giving ceremony. Paul says that we have been baptized with Christ in his death and resurrection, dying with him to sin and rising with him to new life. So, Paul speaks many times of Christians as being "in Christ." Baptism as a sign, a seal, God's confirmation that we belong to the covenant; placing the name of God on us, as high priest placed name of God on Israel (Numbers 6:24-27).

On the basis of that seal, we are admitted into the visible church. Baptism does not give us eternal salvation. Baptized people do sometimes betray the Lord. When they do that, they receive the curses of the covenant rather than the blessings. Baptism does entitle the baptized person to all the blessings of fellowship with God in the church and with God 's people.

2 Major Controversies concerning Baptism - Mode and Subjects

Godly people disagreed for 2000 years! These are minor issues. But, sadly, they carry major consequences in church life. Some churches exclude anybody from membership not been immersed; or has not been baptized as an adult upon profession of faith. But the Scriptures say very little explicitly about Mode or Subjects.

The Mode of Baptism

Defense of Immersion alone

1. Some say Greek word baptize means "to immerse"
2. John chose a place for his ministry, Aenon, was "much water" John 3:23 KJV
3. Matthew 3:16 speaks of Jesus' coming up out of water
4. Immersion better symbolizes our death and resurrection with Christ (Rom 6:2-6; Col. 2:11-12)

Replies to the Immersion argument

1. Greek word baptize not necessarily mean "immerse." Luke 11:38 refers to people's washing before dinner, which was almost certainly not by immersion.
2. John needed "much water" at Aenon simply to have enough water to baptize everybody who came.
3. "going down into the water" and "coming up out of the water" could mean walking down the river bank into the stream for sprinkling or pouring
4. Some locations of baptism make immersion unlikely (Acts 9:11, 1 : 10:25, 47; 16:32- 33), and there are no unmistakable examples of immersion in the New Testament.

Biblical Evidence for Sprinkling and Pouring

1. Hebrews 9:10, the "sprinklings" of the OT law (Hebrews 9.13, 19, 21) are called "baptisms"
2. Christians are "sprinkled" with Jesus' blood (Hebrews 10.22; 12.24; 1 Peter 1.2)
3. Acts 2.17,33 and Romans 5.5 present baptism in Spirit as a "pouring"
4. The Spirit "comes upon" us (Acts 1.8), or "falls upon" us (10.44)

My conclusion immersion, sprinkling, and pouring are all legitimate modes of baptism.

A quote from an Early Church document about church life (not the Bible, but simply an example of early church thought/practice)...“Now concerning baptism, baptize as follows: after you have reviewed all these things, baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in running water. But if you have no running water, then baptize in some other water; and if you are not able to baptize in cold water, then do so in warm. But if you have neither, then pour water on the head three times in the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.”

Didache, ch. 7 (early 2nd century) trans. Michael W. Holmes, *The Apostolic Fathers: Greek Texts and English Translations*, 3rd edn (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007).

Infant Baptism

paedobaptists = "child baptizers"

baptists or antipaedobaptists = infants are excluded from baptism

Credobaptists = those who baptize on the basis of a credo or profession

Question is difficult because Bible does not discuss it explicitly. There is no command in the NT either to baptize or not baptize infants. Paedobaptists say the total biblical evidence requires us to: burden of proof on those who forbid infant baptism, proof is lacking, we must do it. Baptists say, since there is no command to baptize infants, don't do it. Baptists teach baptism should be given only to people who are able to make a profession of faith Christ, and that is impossible for infants.

Specific Arguments about Infant Baptism

"Evangelical" Paedobaptist

1. Baptizing infants is not giving them a new birth or securing a place in heaven
2. Like OT circumcision, it is a rite of entrance into the visible church
3. Believe that the pattern of infant inclusion is carried into the new covenant – Romans 4.11, Colossians 2.11,12
4. Jesus pronounced blessing on children and infants – Luke 18.15-17
5. Peter proclaims the promise is for "you and your children" – Acts 2.39
6. Household baptisms – Acts 11.14, 16.15,31-34, 1 Corinthians 1.16

Professing Believer's Baptist

1. No command to baptize the children of believers
2. NT baptism always linked to profession of faith (Acts 2.41, 8.12, 10.44-48, 16.14,15,32,33)
3. New covenant entrance is not based on birth, but re-birth – John 1.12,13, 3.3-6
4. Faith must be clearly articulated by profession and is necessary to enter new covenant – Romans 10.9-14
5. New covenant experience is the 'knowledge of God' – Jeremiah 31.31-34 / Hebrews 8.7-13
6. Children (and unbelieving spouses) of believers are 'holy' – 1 Corinthians 7.14 – 'set apart' from the world and placed in a blessed 'sphere of influence' to hear and see Gospel truth that they might repent and believe

From BAPTISM @ BICF ZGC 2012 (a document from the Elders who served then...)

Modes of baptism

The elders of BICF ZGC have agreed on a preference for baptism by immersion whenever it is practical, but we will not make this a strict requirement for membership.

Who can be baptized?

Scripture requires faith and repentance before baptism (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, Acts 8:36, and Acts 19:4 & 5). In addition, on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached, “those who received his word” were baptized (Acts 2:41), and when Philip preached the good news to the Samaritans, “they believed Philip,” and “they were baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). Since infants can neither believe nor reject the gospel, they are considered excluded from baptism by scripture. Finally, the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19,20) links making disciples, baptizing, and teaching.

At BICF ZGC we do not practice infant baptism or the baptism of children too young to explain their faith. However, we will not require a believer who has been baptized as an infant to be re-baptized for the purpose of BICF ZGC membership.

Our practice at BICF ZGC

Christian baptism is a requirement for membership in the Beijing International Christian Fellowship. However, we also recognize that many genuine Christians differ regarding the mode and timing of proper Christian baptism. For the purpose of admitting believers into full membership in the fellowship and recognizing their qualification to participate in all aspects of the fellowship, including assuming leadership responsibilities, we accept any Trinitarian baptism that has been meaningful to the individual. To state it plainly, a believer who has been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit in a Christian fellowship, whether as an infant or later, is qualified for full membership in BICF ZGC, and as a member, may participate in all service or leadership activities as specified in the BICF ZGC constitution and bylaws. He or she does not need to be re-baptized to qualify to join, to serve in ministries, or to be a leader in BICF ZGC.

Still, we believe the New Testament teaches baptism after coming to faith, and it provides no examples of infant baptism. Therefore, we will not practice infant baptism or baptism of children too young to explain their faith. We believe candidates for baptism must have genuine, personal faith in Jesus Christ and must be able to articulate that faith to a church leader. We encourage all individuals who have placed their trust in Jesus and who have committed themselves to following him to be baptized as a public testimony of their faith to the community.

In addition, because immersion seems to be the mode of baptism practiced in the New Testament and the mode that best expresses the symbolism of identification with Christ in death, burial and resurrection, we will practice immersion to the extent that is practical, without making immersion a legalistic requirement for proper baptism.

From BAPTISM @ BICF ZGC 2012

* Several of the ‘triangle’ diagrams from my theology professor, John Frame. I highly recommend his writings. Many of them are freely available at: <https://frame-poythress.org/>

His book “Salvation belongs to the Lord: An Introduction to Systematic Theology” (2006, P & R) is ‘lucid, vigorously orthodox, and sweetly pastoral.’ His “Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Christian Belief” (2013, P & R) is all of that and very thorough and detailed.