

15th General Assembly, 1987, Appendix P, p. 416.

BAPTISM

1977, p. 63, 5-33A Baptism and Non-Communing Membership

The Committee makes the following report to the General Assembly on the teaching of the Confession, Catechisms and Book of Church Order regarding infant baptism and non-communicant membership: The primary passages dealing with these matters are:

Westminster Confession chapters XXV, par. 2; XXVII, par. 1 and 4; *Larger Catechism* Question 165; *Shorter Catechism* 91 and 95; *Book of Church Order* 2-1; 6-1; 57-4; 58-1.

The Standards of the PCA define the visible church universal as consisting "of all who make profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, together with their children" (*BCO* 2-1; *WCF* XXV, 2). A particular congregation or denomination is defined as those who have been formally recognized as believers and their children, and who have been solemnly admitted by the sacrament of baptism (*BCO* 4-1,4; 6-1; 57-4; 58-1; *LC* 166).

The Westminster Confession and Catechisms teach that baptism is not to be administered to anyone outside of the visible church. In the case of adult converts, they are viewed as members of the visible church universal by virtue of their profession of faith in Christ and obedience to Him (*WCF* XXV, 2; *LC* 166; *SC* 97; cf. *BCO* 2-1; 6-1). They are thus eligible to receive baptism, which is the solemn admission of the party into a particular congregation of the visible church (*WCF* XXVIII, 1; *LC* 165). The same is true of the children of believers. They are by birth and covenant, members of the visible church universal, and should be recognized as such, and should be solemnly admitted to a particular congregation by the sacrament of baptism (*WCF* XXVIII, 4; *LC* 166; *SC* 95; *BCO* 57-4; 58-1).

This means that a particular congregation should carry on its rolls those who are members of the visible church universal, and who have been solemnly admitted by baptism to a particular church. Likewise, a particular congregation should carry on its rolls as non-communicating members children of believers, who have been solemnly admitted to a particular congregation by baptism. *Adopted*

1985, p. 85, 13-23,

1. That local sessions are the best equipped, as well as being accountable under God, for judging whether the necessary criteria for valid baptism are present in a particular situation. *Adopted*
2. The one presented for Christian baptism as an infant by parents who profess the Christian faith, which parents are later judged to lack a credible profession, has nevertheless received Christian baptism and ought not to be re-baptized.

Adopted

3. That one who is baptized as a supposed convert upon profession of the Christian faith, but who subsequently believes himself to have been unregenerate at the time of his baptism, has nevertheless received Christian baptism and ought not to be re-baptized. *Adopted*
4. That this report be commended to sessions as an acceptable summary of Scripture and the *Westminster Standards* on which to base recommendation numbers 2 and 3. *Adopted*

1987, p. 162, 15-74,

1. That the Assembly receive both the Committee and the Minority Reports, commending them to the attention of its churches and lower courts as information. [Appendix P, p. 416 (see below).] *Adopted*
2. That the Assembly leave decisions in these matters to be made, on a case by case basis, by the lower courts, subject to normal review and control or judicial processes. *Adopted*