

SELECT  
PRACTICAL WRITINGS  
OF  
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## ANSWER

### TO SOME QUESTIONS ON BAPTISM, ETC.

**T**HE baptism now used in the Papistry, is not the true baptism which Christ Jesus did institute, and command to be used in his Kirk; but it is an adulteration and profanation of the same, and therefore, is to be avoided of all God's children.

That it is adulterate, and so, consequently, profane, is evident; First, for many things be added, besides Christ's institution; and all man's additions in God's perfect ordinance, especially in his religion, are execrable and detestable before him. Secondly, the promises of salvation in Christ Jesus, are not in the papistical baptism livelily and truly explained to the people; the word is not preached, yea, that which they need, is not understood. The end and use of a true sacrament is not considered, but rather, are the people led to put their confidence in the bare ceremony.

That none of God's children ought, or may, with pure conscience offer their children to the papistical baptism, one reason of the Holy Ghost pronounced by St. Paul, may instruct and assure such as rather list to be obedient, than contentious. "I would not," saith he, "that ye should have fellowship with devils. Ye may not drink of the Lord's cup, and the cup of devils: ye may not be partaker of the Lord's table, and the table of devils." If the causes why sacraments were instituted be rightly understood and considered, this reason of the apostle shall condemn all those that offer their children to an adulterate sign: for as sacraments, besides their other uses and ends, are ordained to be seals of the righteousness of faith, so are they also a declaration of our profession before the world, and an approbation of that doctrine and religion, which is taught by such as with whom we communicate, in receiving the sacraments. Now, evident it is, that the papistical doctrine, in the chief point of our salvation, and their whole religion, is as contrarious to Christ's doctrine and true religion, as darkness is unto light; which nevertheless is allowed before the world, by all such as communicate with any of their adulterate sacrilege—for sacraments they cannot be properly called. I add, whosoever offer their children to the papistical baptism, offer them to the devil, who was author and first inventor of all such abominations; and therefore, whosoever communicateth with the papistical sacraments, approveth, and before the world alloweth, whatsoever doctrine and religion they profess. Yea, further, who offer their children to the papistical baptism, offer them not to God, nor to Christ Jesus his Son, but to the devil, chief author and inventor of such abominations.

"Shall we be baptised again, (do some demand,) that in our infancy were polluted with that adulterate sign?" I answer, no; for the spirit of

regeneration, which is freely given to us by Christ Jesus, our whole sufficiency, hath purged us from that poison which we drank in the days of our blindness. The fire of the Holy Ghost hath burnt away whatsoever we received at their hands besides Christ Jesus' simple institution. We condemn it as detestable and wicked; and only we approve Christ's ordinance, the vain inventions of all men refused. And this, both before God and man sufficeth, without alteration of the sign; for by faith, and not by external signs, doth God purge our hearts. And our plain and continual confession more serveth to me, than that we should be rebaptised; for that action, and the remembrance of it, should suddenly vanish, when contrariwise, our confession declareth, that in our infancy we received the sign which Christ commanded, which our parents esteemed to have been the true sign of Christ. And in very deed, the malice of the devil could never altogether abolish Christ's institution, for it was ministered to us in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And yet for that time, I confess, by reason of our blindness, it did not profit us, because it was adulterate, and mixed with men's dreams and fantasies. I confess, for the time it did not profit us; but now as said is, the Spirit of Christ Jesus illuminating our hearts, hath purged the same by faith, and maketh the effect of that sacrament to work in us, without any iteration of the external sign.

Hereof I know may two doubts arise: Former, that to the regenerate man, the sacraments are not necessary greatly; Secondly, that it is all one whether our children be baptised with the papistical baptism, or with Christ's true institution. The first I answer, That no man is so regenerate, but that continually he hath need of the means which Christ Jesus, the Wisdom of his eternal Father, hath appointed to be used in his kirk; to wit, the word truly preached, and the sacraments rightly administered. The word and the sacraments has Christ Jesus ordained and commanded to be used in his kirk; therefore ought not the bold presumption of man to separate the same. If the regenerate man hath never received the sacramental sign of baptism, he is bound to receive the same: and that did Peter perfectly understand, seeing the Holy Ghost visibly descend upon Cornelius and his household; which he perfectly understood could not be, without the spirit of regeneration. And that doth he contend and obtain, that they should not be forbidden to be baptised. And Paul also, after his conversion, and after that Christ Jesus had promised that he was a chosen vessel to him, yet was commanded to wash away his sins by baptism. Whereof it is evident, that regeneration doth not so exempt man, but that once he ought to be baptised.

But the question is, Whether a man baptised in papistry, ought to be rebaptised, when he cometh to knowledge? And I answer, he ought not; First, because Christ's institution, as said is, could not be utterly abolished by the malice of Satan, nor by the abuse of man. Secondly, because the spirit of

Christ purgeth, and removeth from us all such venom as we received of their hands; and superstition maketh not the virtue of Christ's institution to be ineffectual in us. We have some respect also, that no more be given to the external sign, than is proper to it; that is, that it be the seal of righteousness, and the sign of regeneration, but neither the cause, neither yet the effect and virtue. The seal once received is durable, and needeth not to be iterated, lest that by iteration and multiplication of the sign, the office of the Holy Spirit, which is, to illuminate, regenerate, and to purge, be attributed unto it.

“But by the same reason,” may some reply, “ought not the Lord's table to be commonly used?” Yes; but if the signification of both sacraments be deeply considered, we shall see, why the one ought to be but once used, and the other oftentimes; for the holy disciples and servants of Christ Jesus dare not dispense with the ordinance of their Lord and Saviour, but rather are humbly subject to the same. And therefore, such as this day condemn the use of sacraments—of the Lord's Table, I mean,—and also, the external word, declare themselves repugnant to the Wisdom of God, who hath commanded his disciples, to use that Table in remembrance of him, that is, of his death, and of the benefits purchased unto us by the same, till his rising again. He putteth no term of perfection, what a man may attain in this life, that he needeth not to use the sacraments, for aid and help to his infirmity; albeit some now-a-days<sup>1</sup> brag of such perfection, that they suppose all such exercises to appertain only to them that are children and infants in Christ, and not to those that are grown to perfection. But as the punishment of such pride and arrogance is manifest this day to the kirk of God,—for their perfection hath brought them to such obstinacy and blindness, that openly they blaspheme Christ Jesus—so shall it be felt by them, when such as with full obedience so knit themselves to Christ's ordinance shall receive the crown of glory.

Baptism is the sign of our first entrance in the household of God our Father; by the which is signified, that we are received in league with him; that we are clad with Christ's righteousness, our sins and filthiness being washed away in his blood. Now, evident it is, that the righteousness of Christ Jesus is permanent, and cannot be defiled; that the league of God is of that firmness and assurance, that rather shall the covenant made with the sun and moon, with the day and night, perish and be changed, than that the promise of his mercy made to his elect shall be frustrate and vain. Now, if Christ's righteousness be inviolable, and the league of God be constant and sure, it is not necessary, that the sign which representeth unto me, and in some manner sealeth in my conscience that I am received in league with God, and so, clad with Christ's righteousness, be oftener than once received; for the iteration

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<sup>1</sup> The Anabaptists.

of it should declare, that before, I was a stranger from God, who never had publicly been received in his household.

“Not so,” shall some say; “but because we have declined from God, by manifest iniquity; and we, so far as in us lay, have broken that league made between God and us, and have spoiled ourselves of all Christ’s righteousness; therefore desire we the former league to be repaired and renewed, by iteration of the sign.” I answer, The iteration of baptism, is not the mean which God hath appointed, to assure our conscience, that the league betwixt God and us is permanent and sure; but his Holy Spirit, writing in our hearts true and unfeigned repentance, leadeth us to the throne of our Father’s mercy. And He, according as he has chosen us in Christ Jesus, his only well-beloved, before the foundation of all worlds were laid, and according as in time he hath called us, and given to us the sign of his children, so doth he acknowledge and avow us yet to be of his heavenly household. And to seal the same his everlasting mercy more deeply in our hearts, and to declare the same before the world. He sendeth us to the table of his dear Son, Christ Jesus our Lord, which, at his last supper in this corporal life had with his disciples, he did institute for his kirk, and command the same to be used, in remembrance of him to his coming again. To the which when we present ourselves, as in heart we do believe (I speak of God’s chosen children,) so in mouth we do confess, and before the world solemnly we protest, that we are the household of God our Father, received in the league of his mercy according to the purpose of his own good pleasure; and that we, members of the body of Christ Jesus, were clad with his righteousness and innocency. And therefore, now doth he admit us to his table, and expressly, in his word, setteth before us the bread of life which descended from heaven, to assure our consciences, that our former defection from him notwithstanding, with joy doth he receive us, as the father did his unthankful and prodigal son, returning to him from his wretched condition, and miserable poverty. This holy table, I say, hath the wisdom of God commanded to be used in his kirk, to assure the members of his body, that his majesty changeth not as man doth, but that his gifts and vocation are such, as of the which he cannot repent him towards his elect. And therefore need they not to run to the external sign of baptism, such, I mean, as once have been baptised, suppose that it was in the papistry. But they ought to have recourse to the effect and signification of baptism; that is, that of free grace and mercy they are received in the household of God: and for better confirmation of themselves in that mystery, and to protest the same before the world, they ought to address themselves, as occasion shall be offered, to the Lord’s table, as before is said.

Hereof I suppose it is proved, that baptism once received, sufficeth in this life, but that the use of the Lord’s table is oftentimes necessary: for the one, to wit, baptism, is the sign of our first entrance; but the other, is the

declaration of our covenant, that by Christ Jesus we be invested, maintained, and continued in the league with God our Father. The sign of our first entrance needeth not to be iterated, because the league is constant and sure; but the sign of our investment and continuance, by reason of our dulness, infirmity, and oblivion, ought oft to be used. And therefore, whosoever shall yet object, that if the papistical baptism can in no sort seal in our hearts the league of God's mercy, since that they, as apostates and traitors, have declined from Christ Jesus, refused his righteousness, and established their own; in few words I answer, that so was whole Israel under Jeroboam, and yet, did none of God's prophets require of those that were circumcised by the priest of Bethel, and by others in that confusion and idolatry, to be circumcised again; but that only they should turn their hearts to the living God, that they should refuse idolatry, and join themselves with the sanctuary of the living God, which was placed at Jerusalem, as in the days of Hezekiah and Josiah is evident. No more ought we to iterate baptism, by whomsoever it was ministered unto us in our infancy; but if God of his mercy call us from blindness, he maketh our baptism, how corrupt that ever it was, available unto us, by the power of his Holy Spirit.

“But then,” shall some say, “it is alike whether my child be baptised with Christ's true institution, or with the adulterate sign.” God avert from us that wilful and foolish blindness! for if so unthankfully we rend God's benefits offered, we and our posterity most justly merit to be deprived of the same; as no doubt they shall, who so lightly do esteem them, that they make no difference nor conscience whether they dedicate and offer their children to God, or unto the devil. Neither shall the deeds of our fathers, who did offer us to the same baptism, excuse. No, for according to the blindness of those times, they judged and esteemed that to be the perfect ordinance and institution of Christ Jesus, and therefore in simplicity, albeit in error, did they offer us, their children, to the same. They did not offer us to be circumcised with the Jew, or with the Turk, but to be baptised as members or Christ's body. The religion was corrupt, and the sign adulterate, I confess; but this was unknown to them, and therefore are not their errors and blindness imputed upon us, their posterity. But what shall this avail us, to whom the light shineth, and the verity is so plainly revealed, that our own conscience must bear record that we do wrong, not of ignorance, but rather of malice; or that we dare not avow Christ Jesus before the world? Shall it not be said unto us, “This is condemnation, that the light is come into the world; but now, men love darkness more nor light. If I had not come, and had spoken unto them, they had had no sin; but now, have they nothing whereby to excuse themselves, because they have seen, and yet do hate”? This assuredly it shall be said to our confusion, if we proceed in such contempt of the graces offered. This, I trust, shall suffice the moderate.

Touching the blood of beasts forbidden to be eaten by the apostle, it doth not bind this day the conscience of Christians: for it was but temporal, and served only till such time, as the Jews and Gentiles might grow together in one body. And if any ask, How can this be done? I answer, by the plain words of St. Paul, who writing to the Corinthians, plainly affirmeth, that meats offered unto idols (which by the decree of the apostle are forbidden, as well as is blood,) are not to be abhorred, neither yet to be abstained from, for any other cause, but only for the conscience of him that shall admonish, that such things were offered into idols. “For his conscience’ sake,” saith the apostle, “thou shalt abstain; otherwise, thou mayest eat whatsoever is sold in the butchery.” And to the Romans, he solemnly protesteth, and that by the Lord Jesus, that he assuredly knoweth, that nothing is common (that is, unclean and defiled.) by itself, but to him that esteemeth it unclean. And our Master and Saviour, Christ Jesus, the end of the law, and the accomplishment of all signs, doth deliver our conscience from all doubts, saying, “Not that which entereth by the mouth, defileth the man, but that which proceedeth from the heart.” Hereof I suppose it is plain, that the precept to abstain from blood, given by the apostle, was temporary, and not perpetual; for otherwise the Holy Ghost, speaking often of the liberty of the Gentiles, would have restrained and excepted it, as he hath done scortation,<sup>1</sup> which in the same decree is expressed, and licentious and filthy communication, which the Gentiles esteemed none or small sins.

Touching Tithes, by the law of God they appertain to no priest, for now, we have no Levitical priesthood; but by law positive, gift, custom, they appertain to princes, and by their commandment, to men of kirk, as they will be termed. In their first donation, respect was had to another end, as their own law doth witness, than now is observed—For first, respect was had, that such as were accounted distributors of those things that were given to the kirkmen, should have their reasonable sustentation of the same, making just account of the rest, how it was to be bestowed upon the poor, the stranger, the widow, the fatherless, for whose relief, all such rents and duties were chiefly appointed to the kirk. Secondly, that provision should be made for the ministers of the kirk, that more freely, and without solicitude and care, they might attend upon their vocation, which was, to teach and instruct the people of God. And some respect was had to the repairing of the kirks, etc. Whereof no jot is at this day in the papacy rightly observed. The poor, we see altogether neglected by the bishops, proud prelates, and filthy clergy, who upon their own bellies, licence, and vanity, consume whatsoever was commanded to be bestowed upon the poor; they preach not truly and

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<sup>1</sup> Fornication.

sincerely, but their lands, rents, and pompous prelacies are all they care, and set reckoning of.