

I'm not robot!

Use which we are first received into the Christian Church. However, in order that we may be readily understood, we will treat of it in an orderly manner, and keep only to what is necessary for us to know. For how it is to be maintained and defended against heretics and sects we will commend to the learned. 3 In the first place, we must know all things know well the words upon what Baptism is founded, to which everything refers that is to be said on the subject, namely, where the Lord Christ speaks in Matthew 28:19. 4 Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Likewise in St. Mark 16:7. 5 He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. 6 In these words you must note, in the first case, that here stand God's commandment and institution, lest we doubt that Baptism is divine, not devised nor invented by men. For as truly as I can say, the Son of God has spun the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer out of his head, but they are revealed and given by God Himself, so also I can boast that Baptism is no human trifles, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved, lest any one regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. 7 For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism 8 excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing, and that external things are of no benefit. But let it be ever so much an external thing, here stand God's Word and command which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. But what God institutes and commands cannot be a vain, but must be a most precious thing, though in appearance it were of less value than a straw. 9 If hitherto people could consider it a great thing when the Pope with his letters and bulls dispensed indulgences and confirmed altars and churches, solely because of the letters and seals, we ought to esteem Baptism much more highly and more precious, because God has commanded it, and, besides, it is performed in His name. For these are the words, Go ye, baptize; however, not in your name, but in the name of God. 10 For to be baptized in the name of God is to be baptized by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own work. From this fact every one may himself readily infer that it is a far higher work than any work performed by a man or a saint. For what work greater than the work of God can we do? 11 But here the devil is busy to delude us with false appearances, and lead us away from the work of God to our own works. For there is a much more splendid appearance when a Christian does many great and difficult works, and we all think much more of that which we do and merit ourselves, 12 than the Scriptures teach thus: Even though we should collect in one mass the works of all the monks, however splendidly they may shine, they would not be as noble and good as if God should pick up a straw. Why? Because the person is nobler and better. Here, then, we must not estimate the person according to the works, but the works according to the person, from whom they must derive their nobility. 13 But insane reason will not regard this, and because Baptism does not shine like the works which we do, it is to be esteemed as nothing. 14 From this we learn a proper understanding of the subject, and how to answer the question what Baptism is, namely thus, that it is not mere ordinary water, but water comprehended in God's Word and command, and sanctified thereby, so that it is nothing else than a divine water; not that the water in itself is nobler than other water, but that God's Word and command are added. 15 Therefore it is pure wickedness and blasphemy of the devil that now our new spirits, to mock at Baptism, omit from it God's Word and institution, and look upon it in no other way than as water which is taken from the well, and then blather and say: How is a handful of water to help the soul? 16 Aye, my friend, who does not know that water is water if tearing things asunder is what are after? But how dare you thus interfere with God's order, and tear away the most precious treasure with which God has connected and enclosed it, and which He will not have separated? For the kernel in the water is God's Word or command and the name of God, which is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth. 17 Comprehend the difference, then, that Baptism is quite another thing than all other water; not on account of the natural quality but because something more noble is here added; for God Himself stakes His honor, His power and might on it. Therefore it is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water, and in whatever other terms we can praise it, -all on account of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word, that no one can sufficiently extol, for it has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do (since it has all the virtue and power of God comprised in it). 18 Hence one derives its essence as a Sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught. Accordant verbum et sacramentum fit sacramentum. That is, when the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament, that is, a holy and divine matter and sign. 19 Therefore we always teach that the sacrament and all external things which God ordains and institutes should not be regarded according to the coarse, external mask, as we regard the shell of a nut, but as the Word of God is included therein. 20 For thus we also speak of the parental estate and of civil government. If we propose to regard them in as far as they have noses, eyes, skin, and hair, flesh and bones, they look like Turks and heathen, and some one might start up and say: Why should I esteem them more than others? But because the commandment is added: Honor thy father and thy mother, I behold a different man, adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God. The commandment (I say) is the chain of gold about his neck, yea, the crown upon his head, which shows to me how and why one must honor this flesh and blood. 21 Thus, and much more even, you must honor Baptism and esteem it glorious on account of the Word, since He Himself has honored it both by words and deeds; moreover, confirmed it with miracles from heaven. For do you think it was a jest that, when Christ was baptized, the heavens were opened and the Holy Ghost descended visibly, and everything was divine glory and majesty? 22 Therefore I exhort again that these two, the water and the Word, by no means be separated from one another and parted. For if the Word is separated from it, the water is the same as that with which the servant cooks, and may indeed be called a bath-keeper's baptism. But when it is added, as God has ordained, it is a Sacrament, and is called Christ-Baptism. Let this be the first part, regarding the essence and dignity of the holy Sacrament. 23 In the second place, since we know now what Baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted; that is, what it profits, gives, and works. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. 24 Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely, to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, that he be saved. 25 But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with Him forever. 26 Here you see again how highly and precious we should esteem Baptism, because in it we obtain such an unspeakable treasure, which also indicates sufficiently that it cannot be ordinary mere water. For mere water could not do such a thing, but the Word does it, and (as said above) the fact that the name of God is comprehended therein. 27 But where the name of God is, there must be also life and salvation, that it may indeed be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water; for by the Word such power is imparted to Baptism that it is a laver of regeneration, as St. Paul also calls it, Titus 3:5. 28 But as our would-be wise, new spirits assert that faith alone saves, and that works and external things avail nothing, we answer: It is true, indeed, that nothing in us is of any avail but faith, as we shall hear still further. 29 But these blind guides are unwilling to see this, namely, that faith must have something which it believes, that is, of which it takes hold, and upon which it stands and rests. Thus faith clings to the water, and believes that it is Baptism, in which there is pure salvation and life; not through the water (as we have sufficiently stated), but through the fact that it is embodied in the Word and institution of God, and the name of God inheres in it. Now, if I believe this, what else is it than believing in God as in Him who has given and planted His Word into this ordinance, and proposes to us this external thing wherein we may apprehend such a treasure? 30 Now, they are so mad as to separate faith, and that to which faith clings and is bound, though it be something external. Yea, it shall and must be something external, that it may be apprehended by the senses, and understood and thereby be brought into the heart, as indeed the entire Gospel is an external, verbal preaching. In short, what God does and works in us He proposes to work through such external ordinances. Wherever, therefore, He speaks, yea, in whichever direction or by whatever means He speaks, thither faith must look, and to that it must hold. 31 Now here we have the words: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. To what else do they refer than to Baptism, that is, to the water comprehended in God's ordinance? Hence it follows that whoever rejects the Word of God, faith, and Christ, who directs us thither and binds us to Baptism. 32 In the third place, since we have learned the great benefit and power of Baptism, let us see further who is the person that receives what Baptism gives and profits. 33 This is again most beautifully and clearly expressed in the words: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. That is, faith alone makes the person worthy to receive profitably the saving, divine water. For, since these blessings are here presented and promised in the words and with the water, they cannot be received in any other way than by believing them with the heart. 34 Without faith it profits nothing, notwithstanding it is in itself a divine superabundant treasure. Therefore this single word (He that believeth) effects this much that it excludes and repels all works which we can do, in the opinion that we obtain and merit salvation by them. For it is determined that whatever is not faith avails nothing nor receives anything. 35 But if they say, as they are accustomed: Still Baptism is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation; what, then, becomes of faith? Answer: Yes, our works, indeed, avail nothing for salvation; Baptism, however, is not our work, but God's (for, as was stated, you must put Christ-Baptism far away from a bath-keeper's baptism). God's works, however, are saving and necessary for salvation, and do not exclude, but demand, faith; for without faith they could not be apprehended. 36 For by suffering the water to be poured upon you, you have not yet received Baptism in such a manner that it benefits you anything; but it becomes beneficial to you if you have yourself baptized with the thought that this is according to God's command and ordinance, and besides in God's name, in order that you may receive in the water the promised salvation. Now, this the first cannot do, nor the body; but the heart must believe it. 37 Thus you see plainly that there is here no work done by us, but a treasure which He gives us, and which faith apprehends; just as the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross is not a work, but a treasure comprehended in the Word, and offered to us and received by faith. Therefore they do us violence by attacking against us as though we preach against faith, while we openly insist upon it as being of such necessity that without it nothing can be received nor enjoyed. 38 Thus we have these three parts which it is necessary to know concerning this Sacrament, especially that the ordinance of God is to be held in all honor, which alone should be sufficient, though it be an entirely external thing, like the commandment, Honor thy father and thy mother, which refers to bodily flesh and blood. Therein we regard not the flesh and blood, but the commandment of God in which they are comprehended, and on account of which the flesh is called father and mother; so also, though we had no more than these words, Go ye and baptize, etc., it would be necessary for us to accept and do it as the ordinance of God. 39 Now there is here not only God's commandment and injunction, but also the promise, on account of which it is still far more glorious than whatever else God has commanded and ordained, and is, in short, so full of consolation and grace that heaven and earth cannot comprehend it. 40 But it requires skill to believe this, for the treasure is not wanting, but this is wanting that men apprehend it and hold it firmly. 41 Therefore every Christian has enough in Baptism to learn and to practise all his life; for he has always enough to do to believe firmly what it promises and brings: victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, the entire Christ, and the Holy Ghost with His gifts. 42 In short, it is so transcendent that if timid nature could realize it, it might well doubt whether it could be true. 43 For consider, if there were somewhere a physician who understood the art of saving men from dying, or, even though they died, of restoring them speedily to life, so that they would thereafter live forever, how the world would pour in money like snow and rain, so that because of the throng of the rich no one could find access! But here in Baptism there is brought free to every one's door such a treasure and medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive. 44 Thus we must regard Baptism and make it profitable to ourselves, that when our sins and conscience oppress us, we stand upon ourselves and take comfort and say: Nevertheless I am baptized, and I am saved. 45 For this is the reason why these two things are done in Baptism, namely, that the body, which can apprehend nothing but what it sees, is sprinkled, and, in addition, the heart is spoken for the soul to apprehend. 46 Now, since both the water and the Word, are one Baptism, therefore body and soul must be saved and live forever; the soul through the Word which it believes, but the body because it is united with the soul and also apprehends Baptism as it is able to apprehend it. We have, therefore, no greater jewel in body and soul, for by it we are made holy and are saved, which no other kind of life, no work upon earth, can attain. Let this suffice respecting the nature, blessing, and use of Baptism, for it answers the present purpose. Of Infant Baptism. 47 Here a question occurs by which the devil, through his sects, confuses the world, namely, Of Infant Baptism, whether children also believe, and are justly baptized. Concerning this we say briefly: 48 Let the simple dismiss this question from their minds, and refer it to the learned. 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Now, since God confirms Baptism by the gifts of His Holy Ghost, as is plainly perceptible in some of the church fathers, as St. Bernard, Gerson, John Hus, and others, who were baptized in infancy, and since the holy Christian Church cannot perish until the end of the world, they must acknowledge that such infant baptism is pleasing to God. For He can never be opposed to Himself, or support falsehood and wickedness, or, for its promotion impart His grace and Spirit. 51 Thus I am given our work, and take comfort and say: Nevertheless I am baptized, and I am saved. 52 Further, we say that we are not so much concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not, for on that account Baptism does not become invalid; but everything depends upon the Word and command of God. 53 This now is perhaps somewhat acute, but it rests entirely upon what I have said, that Baptism is nothing else than water and the Word of God in and with each other, that when the Word is added to the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith be wanting. For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid even though it be wrongly received or employed, since it is not bound (as stated) to our faith, but to the Word. 54 For even though a Jew should to-day come dishonestly and with evil purpose, and we should baptize him in all good faith, we must say that his baptism is nevertheless genuine. For here is the water together with the Word of God, even though he does not receive it as he should, just as those who unworthily go to the Sacrament receive the true Sacrament, even though they do not believe. 55 Thus you see that the objection of the sectarians is vain. For (as we have said) even though infants did not believe, which, however, is not the case, yet their baptism as now shown would be valid, and no one should rebaptize them, just as nothing is detracted from the Sacrament though some one approach it with evil purpose, and he could not be allowed on account of his abuse to take it a second time the selfsame hour, as though he had not received the true Sacrament at first; for that would mean to blaspheme and profane the Sacrament in the worst manner. How dare we think that God's Word and ordinance should be wrong and invalid because we make a wrong use of it? 56 Therefore I say, if you did not believe then believe now and say thus: The baptism indeed was right, but I, alas! did not receive it aright. 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