

OF BAPTISM

CCCXL.

The ancient teachers ordained three kinds of baptizing; of water, of the Spirit, and of blood; these were observed in the church. The catechumens were baptized in water; others, that could not get such water-bathing, and nevertheless believed, were saved in and through the Holy Spirit, as Cornelius was saved, before he was baptized. The third kind was baptized in blood, that is, in martyrdom.

CCCXLI.

Heaven is given unto me freely, for nothing. I have assurance hereof confirmed unto me by sealed covenants, that is, I am baptized, and frequent the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Therefore I keep the bond safe and sure, lest the devil tear it in pieces; that is, I live and remain in God's fear and pray daily unto him. God could not have given me better security of my salvation, and of the gospel, than by the death and passion of his only Son: when I believe that he overcame death, and died for me, and therewith behold the promise of the Father, then I have the bond complete. And when I have the seal of baptism and the Lord's Supper prefixed thereto, then I am well provided for.

I was asked: when there is uncertainty, whether a person has been baptized, or not, may he be baptized under a condition, as thus: If thou be not baptized, then I baptize thee? I answered: The church must exclude such baptizing, and not endure it, though there be a doubt of the previous baptizing of any person, yet he shall receive baptism, pure and simple without any condition.

CCCXLIII.

The papists, in private confession, only regard the work. There was such a running to confession, they were never satisfied; if one had forgotten to confess any thing, however trivial, which afterwards came to his remembrance, off he must be back to his confessor, and confess again. I knew a doctor in law who was so bent upon confessing, that, before he could receive the sacrament, he went three times to his confessor. In my time, while in popedom, we made our confessors weary, and they again perplexed us with their conditional absolutions; for they absolved in this manner: "I absolve and loosen thee, by reason of the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, of the sorrow of thy heart, of thy mouth's confession, and of the satisfaction of thy works," etc. These conditions, and what pertained thereunto, were the cause of great mischief. All this we did out of fear, that thereby we might be justified and saved before God; we were so troubled and overburdened with traditions of men, that Gerson was constrained to slacken the

bridle of the conscience and ease it; he was the first who began to break out of this prison, for he wrote, that it was no mortal sin to neglect the ordinances and commandments of the church, or to act contrary to them, unless it were done out of contempt, wilfully, or from a stubborn mind. These words, although they were but weak and few, yet they raised up and comforted many consciences.

Against such bondage and slavery I wrote a book on Christian liberty, showing that such strict laws and ordinances of human inventions ought not to be observed. There are now, however, certain gross, ignorant, and inexperienced fellows, who never felt such captivity, that presumptuously undertake utterly to condemn and reject all laws and ordinances.

CCCXLIV.

If a woman that had murdered her child were absolved by me, and the crime were afterwards discovered publicly, and I were examined before the judge, I might not give witness in the matter - we must make a difference between the church and temporal government. She confessed not to me as to a man, but to Christ, and if Christ keep silence thereupon, it is my duty to keep silence also, and to say: I know nothing of the matter thereof: if Christ heard it, then may he speak of it; though, meantime, I would privately say to the woman: Thou wretch, do so no more. For, while I am not the man to speak before the seat of justice, in temporal causes, in matters touching the conscience, I ought to affright sinners with God's wrath against sin, through the law. Such as acknowledge and confess their sins, I must lift up and comfort again, by the preaching of the Gospel. We will not be drawn to their seats of justice, and markets of hatred and dissension. We have hitherto protected and maintained the jurisdiction and rights of the church, and still will do so, yielding not in the least to the temporal jurisdiction in causes belonging to doctrine and consciences. Let them mind their charge, wherewith they will find enough to do, and leave ours to us, as Christ has commanded.

CCCXLV.

Auricular confession was instituted only that people might give an account of their faith, and from their hearts confess an earnest desire to receive the holy sacrament. We force no man thereunto.

CCCXLVI.

Christ gave the keys to the church for her comfort, and commanded her servants to deal therewith according to his direction, to bind the impenitent, and to absolve them that, repenting, acknowledge and confess their sins, are heartily sorry for them, and believe that God forgives them for Christ's sake.

CCCXLVII.

It was asked, did the Hussites well in administering the sacrament to young children, on the allegation that the graces of God apply equally to all human creatures? Dr. Luther replied: they

were undoubtedly wrong, since young children need not the communion for their salvation; but still the innovation could not be regarded as a sin of the Hussites, since St Cyprian, long ago, set them the example.

CCCXLVIII.

Does he to whom the sacrament is administered by a heretic, really receive the sacrament? Yes, replied Dr. Luther: if he be ignorant that the person administering is a heretic. The sacramentarians reject the body of Christ: the Anabaptists, baptism, and therefore they cannot efficiently baptize; yet if a person apply to a sacramentarian, not knowing him as such, and receive from him the sacrament, himself believing it to be the veritable body of Christ, it is the veritable body of Christ that he actually receives.

CCCXLIX.

The Anabaptists cavil as to how the salvation of man is to be effected by water. The simple answer is, that all things are possible to him who believes in God Almighty. If, indeed, a baker were to say to me: "This bread is a body, and this wine is blood," I should laugh at him incredulously. But when Jesus Christ, the Almighty God, taking in his hand bread and wine, tells me: "This is my body and my blood," then we must believe, for it is God who speaks - God who with a word created all things.

CCCL.

It was asked whether, in a case of necessity, the father of a family might administer the Lord's supper to his children or servants. Dr. Luther replied, "By no means, for he is not called thereto, and they who are not called, may not preach, much less administer the sacrament. It would lead to infinite disorder, for many people would then wholly dispense with the ministers of the church."

CCCLI.

When Jesus Christ directed his apostles to go and instruct and baptize all nations, he meant not that children should be excluded: the apostles were to baptize all the Gentiles, young or old, great or small. The baptism of children is distinctly enjoined in Mark x. 14: "The kingdom of God is of little children." We must not look at this text with the eyes of a calf, or of a cow vaguely gaping at a new gate, but do with it as at court we do with the prince's letters, read it and weigh it, and read it and weigh it again and again, with our most earnest attention.

CCCLII.

The papists say that it was Pope Melchiades baptized the emperor Constantine, but this is fiction. The emperor Constantine was baptized at Nicomedia, by Eusebius, bishop of that town, in the sixty-fifth year of his life, and the thirty-third of his reign.

CCCLIII.

The Anabaptists pretend that children, not as yet having reason, ought not to receive baptism. I answer: That reason in no way contributes to faith. Nay, in that children are destitute of reason, they are all the more fit and proper recipients of baptism. For reason is the greatest enemy that faith has: it never comes to the aid of spiritual things, but - more frequently than not - struggles against the Divine Word, treating with contempt all that emanates from God. If God can communicate the Holy Ghost to grown persons, he can, *a fortiori*, communicate it to young children. Faith comes of the Word of God, when this is heard; little children hear that Word when they receive baptism, and therewith they receive also faith.

CCCLIV.

Some one sent to know whether it was permissible to use warm water in baptism? The Doctor replied: "Tell the blockhead that water, warm or cold, is water."

CCCLV.

In 1541, Doctor Menius asked Doctor Luther, in what manner a Jew should be baptized? The Doctor replied: You must fill a large tub with water, and, having divested the Jew of his clothes, cover him with a white garment. He must then sit down in the tub, and you must baptize him quite under the water. The ancients, when they were baptized, were attired in white, whence the first Sunday after Easter, which was peculiarly consecrated to this ceremony, was called *dominica in albis*. This garb was rendered the more suitable, from the circumstance that it was, as now, the custom to bury people in a white shroud; and baptism, you know, is an emblem of our death. I have no doubt that when Jesus was baptized in the river Jordon, he was attired in a white robe. If a Jew, not converted at heart, were to ask baptism at my hands, I would take him on to the bridge, tie a stone round his neck, and hurl him into the river; for these wretches are wont to make a jest of our religion. Yet, after all, water and the Divine Word being the essence of baptism, a Jew, or any other, would be none the less validly baptized, that his own feelings and intentions were not the result of faith.

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