

## CONFESSION OF FAITH.

### CHAPTER 28.-Of Baptism.

VI. The efficacy of Baptism is not tied to that moment of time, wherein it is administered<sup>1</sup>; yet, notwithstanding, by the right use of the Ordinance, the grace promised, is not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age, or infants) as that Grace belongeth unto, according to the Council of Gods own Will, in his appointed time<sup>2</sup>.

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Question 1.—*Is the efficacy of baptism tied to the moment of time, wherein it is administered?*

*Answer.*—No. John 3:5,8. Thus do the Papists and Lutherans sin in excess holding baptism to be a vehicle and vessel containing grace. In so doing they have imbibed the opinion that baptism works grace physically and *ex opere operato* as if baptism possessed a force implanted and inherent in it of conferring and effecting grace. This error stands in placing the efficacy of baptism in the external administration of the water and not in the promise signed and sealed thereby. They are confuted because: 1.) The sacraments (of which baptism is one) are nowhere called vehicles or receptacles of grace, but are expressly said to be signs and seals of the Covenant of grace, Rom. 4:11; Gen. 17:10; Ex. 12:13. But signs and seals convey nothing of inherent virtue. The *rainbow* does not have the capability of preventing a flood, Gen. 9:13 (it is a token, אֵימָה, or sign); the *fleece* of Gideon did not conquer the enemies, Judg. 6:36-40; and the turning back of the *shadow* did not render health to Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:9-11. 2.) There is nothing said of the efficacy of baptism which is not likewise said of the efficacy of the truth, Jas. 1:18; John 17:19. But the mere hearing of the truth saves no one, 1 Thess. 1:5. 3.) Baptism cannot be the only or ordinary means of regeneration, because faith and repentance are the fruits of regeneration, but the *pre*-requisites of baptism, Acts 2:38; 8:37; 10:47. 4.) Universal experience in Romanist and Ritualistic communities proves that the baptized are not generally regenerated. Our Savior says, “By their *fruits* ye shall know them.” Matt. 7:20. 5.) If such efficacy had been communicated to water, namely, that it could engender such spiritual graces in the soul, water should then have spiritual characteristics, for the operations of any cause are directly related to its qualities or characteristics. As are the qualities, so is likewise the efficacy of the operations; the efficacy of the operations agrees with the qualities. To be a physical object and yet to have spiritual qualities by which spiritual things are engendered in a spirit is contradictory in nature; a physical object would then be transformed into a nonphysical object, *cf.* John 3:5, 6. To be a physical object while simultaneously not being a physical object is as contradictory as “yes” and “no.” God is, however, a God of truth who works in His creatures in harmony with their nature; He does not reverse their nature. 6.) Scripture expressly denies that the sign has the efficacy to work grace, Matt. 3:11. Here the persons and their work and the efficacy of their work are placed in distinction to each other. John and Christ baptized with water,

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<sup>1</sup>John 3:5,8.

<sup>2</sup>Gal. 3:27; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:25,26; Acts 2:38,41.

and baptizing with the Holy Spirit and with fire is being energized by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is denied that John, the water, and his baptism have this efficacy, but it is attributed to Christ. Therefore the baptized person receives saving graces, not due to the efficacy of the water, but from Christ through the Holy Spirit. This is also evident in 1 Peter 3:21. The apostle drew a parallel with the flood. Noah was saved by virtue of the water which caused the ark to float. Peter applied this to baptism, declaring that it also saves. He added to this the manner in which it does and does not save. He denied that it is the water of baptism which saves by saying, "not the putting away of the filth of the flesh"; but he posits salvation as being in Christ's resurrection after His suffering, which is received by faith and sealed in baptism, 1 Cor. 15:14; Rom. 10:9. Thereby the believing soul receives freedom to come to God with a conscience having been cleansed in the blood of Christ, and to ask if he is then not justified and has peace with God, a matter of which the soul becomes conscious while asking for it and perceives the efficacy while appropriating it, Rom. 3:25, 26. 7.) Because the baptism of the Spirit, at one time goes before, at another time follows baptism with water, Acts 10:37; Matt. 3:11. 8.) Since it is faith which renders baptism spiritually efficacious, it is thus not the water which does so due to inherent efficacy. Faith is not to be found in the water, but rather in the baptized person. This efficacy proceeds from faith, Heb. 4:2 (μῆσυνγκεκρασμένους τῇ πίστει; not united by faith). This is evident because the element is not a sacrament apart from the institutional formula and the promise. When the word is joined to the element, it then becomes a sacrament, and the Word of God cannot be operative and beneficial except it be received by faith, Heb. 4:12; furthermore, one neither may nor can receive baptism except by faith, Acts 8:37; cf. Mark 16:16. Thus, the efficacy of baptism is not related to the water, but is due to faith which unites the sign to the matter signified, and is operative in reference to the institutional formula and promise.

*Question 2.—By the right use of the ordinance, is the grace promised, not only offered, but really exhibited, and conferred, by the Holy Ghost, to such (whether of age, or infants) as that grace belongs unto, according to the council of God's own will, in his appointed time?*

*Answer.*—Yes. Gal. 3:27; Tit. 3:5; Eph. 5:25,26; Acts 2:38,41. Thus do the Anabaptists and Quakers sin in defect maintaining that baptism is simply a sign of grace and badge of Christian profession or of no use at all. They are confuted because: 1.) The sacramental signs (of which baptism is one) signify respecting the promise, both the gift on God's part, and the reception on ours, 1 Cor. 11:24. 2.) These divinely appointed signs of a promise do seal it, Rom. 4:11; Gen. 17:10-14. Thus we see the sacraments warrant faith in God. 3.) The blessing promised is actually conveyed or conferred to the believer by the sign. The sign was instituted as a means of actual conveyance—assuring us, by the sign, that God gives the thing signified, 1 Cor. 10:16,17; 11:24. 4.) The spiritual blessing—the grace promised—is actually conveyed or conferred to the believer by means of the sign by the blessing of Christ, and the working of his Spirit, 1 Cor. 3:6,7; 12:13. 5.) God has assured the believing receiver that he will give the blessing signified, Matt. 18:20; 28:20; 1 Cor. 10:16,17; 11:24.