

The Ordinances Of The Church

By

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There are only two ordinances of the church, baptism and the Lord's Supper. There has been great confusion, conflict, and consternation about these two ordinances delivered to us by the Lord Himself (Mat. 3:14-15, 28:18-20) and reaffirmed by revelation to Paul, "the apostle to the Gentiles," (Rom. 11:13) for the church (Acts 19:3-5, 1 Cor. 1:14-17, 11:23-24, Col. 2:12). The areas of disagreement encompass a whole gamut of considerations and false declarations such as: (1) Baptism saves;¹ (2) Baptism can be by affusion;² (3) Pedobaptism (infant baptism) is appropriate and saves;³ (4) The "sacraments" of a church (i.e. baptism and the mass) remove sin(s) and saves;⁴ (5) Baptism and the Lord's Supper are not necessary. Some individuals insist baptism in the church age is by the Holy Spirit and does not require water baptism. Hyperdispensationalists are guilty of this apostasy.⁵ (6) Lastly, others would add procedures and observances to the two ordinances that are not a part of the two "symbolic rites"⁶ of the church, such as foot-washing and an agape feast.

"The Papal Church [wrongly] holds to seven sacraments or ordinances:--ordination, confirmation, matrimony, extreme unction, penance, baptism, and the eucharist."⁷ [my addition, HDW]

We must turn to the words of God to discover the truth. We must avoid the bane traditions of man (Col. 2:8). We must shun compromise or "tolerance" of non-Biblical positions in order to accommodate false beliefs and practices. We must *not* let the charge that we do *not* love others or that we should be more tolerant of others deter truthful dogmatics.

The ordinances of the church do not confer either grace or holiness as proclaimed by several denominations such as the Lutherans and Catholics. The two ordinances are

“remembrances” for us of the work of our great God and Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, until He returns for His bride, the church.

Baptism

The character of the debate about baptism centers on the meaning of the Greek word, βαπτίζω (v. baptize: to dip, immerse, submerge, make fully wet, plunge, sink) and related words (n. βαπτισμα, baptism and βαπτιστήj, Baptist). There is no doubt from history that to baptize means “to immerse.”⁸ Dr. Roy Wallace points out that

“DeStourdza, a great theologian of the Greek church, wrote: “Baptizo signifies literally and always ‘to plunge.’ Baptism and immersion are therefore identical.”⁹

Furthermore, the early mosaics, pictures, and drawings on walls demonstrate immersion as the method of baptism. Dr. George E. Rice reports,

“The evolution of Christian baptism through the centuries has been recorded in mortar and bricks, paint and mosaics. Among the ruins of early Christian structures, and also in ancient churches still in use, the history of Christian baptism can be traced. Paintings in catacombs and churches, mosaics on floors, walls, and ceilings, sculptured reliefs, and drawings in ancient New Testament manuscripts add details to this history, as well as raising interesting questions that need further investigation.

The record left by these various witnesses overwhelmingly testifies to immersion as the normal mode of baptism in the Christian church during the first ten to fourteen centuries. This is in addition to the evidence found throughout the writings of the church fathers that immersion was the early church’s common mode of baptism.”¹⁰

There is great controversy over the use of prepositions in the Scriptures in regard to the ordinances.¹¹ However, this author believes that the King James translators got the prepositions right and that the original words of Scripture indicate that individuals, including our Lord, went “into” not “unto” the water (Mk 1:10, Jn. 3:23, Acts 8:38-39). What more needs to be said? When someone receives the ordinance of baptism, it means to be immersed, or fully cover with water. Baptism is symbolic. It is for the believer who accepts the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour (Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 2:20, Col. 2:12, 1 Pe. 3:21, Acts 2:41, 8:12).

There is no clear example of infant baptism, and there is no command for infant baptism in Scripture that is consistent with baptism for professing believers in Jesus Christ; and profession in Jesus Christ is impossible for infants.¹²

Baptism does not either “regenerate” or confer forgiveness as some claim. The anti-Nicene pastors Irenaeus and Tertullian allegedly believed that baptism regenerates.

“Irenaeus (adv. Haer. I. c2l 1) in support of baptismal regeneration writes calling water baptism: “...the washing of regeneration...baptism of regeneration unto God. Tertullian began his “De Baptismate” with: “Blessed is our sacrament of water, in that, by washing away the sins of our early blindness, we are liberated into eternal life.” And further on: “We, little fishes...are born in water.”¹³

However, it is not altogether clear that Irenaeus meant baptism saves; *and* all documents from the early Christian period have to be viewed with care because of the frequent corruption of early writings in order to establish a doctrine held by early “Christian” apostates and heretics. Furthermore, Irenaeus and Tertullian’s statements could be considered consistent with the typology of the ordinance of Baptism. The Lord Jesus Christ said “except a man be born of the water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). And He said,

“...If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet *given*; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)” John 7:37-39

Therefore, “water” in the Scriptures is often typically the Holy Spirit, who regenerates and may well be what is meant by Irenaeus and Tertullian’s words. In addition, water in Scripture may typically be God’s words and salvation comes by faith (Gr. **pis tij**, pistis) in the Lord Jesus Christ; and “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Lastly, Irenaeus and Tertullian battled heresy and they wrote extensively about various cults; so, their words may well have been quoted out of context.

Acts 2:38 is one of the most abused verses of Scripture in regard to baptism. Luther B.

McIntyre says,

“Those who insist on the necessity of water baptism for salvation rely heavily on Acts 2:38, “Repent, and let each of you be baptized, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.” Das says of this verse, “This has been a pivotal verse for the Lutheran, sacramental position.” The exegetical arguments almost without exception have focused on the interpretation of the word *eis* (rendered “for” in the New American Standard Bible). Those favoring the doctrine of baptismal regeneration understand *eis* as purposive or causative. The usual evangelical position is stated by Robertson, who pointed out that another valid interpretation is that *eis* may mean the basis or ground on which baptism is performed.”¹⁴

He goes on to explain syntax, Greek word order, and the relationship of Acts 2:38 to other passages; and He concludes that the phrase “be baptized” by most linguists is considered parenthetical and that no baptismal regeneration occurs.¹⁵ Baptism in water is a “figure” of souls saved by the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as it is so aptly described by the apostle Peter.

“...when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” 1 Peter 3:20-21

The Lord’s Supper

The Lord’s Supper is a solemn “symbolic rite,” which calls to our remembrance “the constant dependence on the once crucified, now risen Saviour, as source of its spiritual life.”¹⁶ It was instituted by Jesus (Mat. 26:26-30, 1 Cor. 11:23-29). This *church* ordinance is all about the Lord Jesus Christ. The symbolic bread and fruit of the vine used in the rite are unleavened (non-alcoholic, cf. Ex. 23:18, Prov. 31:4). They *represent* the broken body and shed blood of our Saviour, respectively (Jn. 6:56-57, 63). The passage in John 6:56-57 cannot mean to literally drink Christ’s shed blood because He had not yet been to the Cross. The prerequisites for participation in the Lord’s Supper are salvation, baptism, church membership, and an orderly walk, and last, but not least, self examination (1 Cor. 10:17, 11:28, Acts 2:41-42).

The doctrines of transubstantiation and consubstantiation taught by the Roman Catholics and the Lutherans respectively have no part in the Lord's Supper.

In A.D. 831 Radbertus, a monk in the monastery of Corbie, France, wrote a treatise entitled "On the Body and Blood of the Lord," in which he taught the doctrine of transubstantiation. Radbertus taught that when the priest uttered Christ's words of the consecration ("This is my body...this is my blood"), a miracle took place: the bread and wine changed to the literal body and blood of Christ. Although the outward phenomena, including color, form, and taste of the physical elements, remained the same, inwardly a miracle took place. Radbertus based his belief on John 6 ("I am the bread of life...eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood") and Christ's upper room statements, interpreted as literal language. He said that the value of this miracle, however, only applied to the believer who partook in faith; it was noneffective for the unbeliever. This view was initially opposed but was officially adopted in the thirteenth century by the Roman Catholic church.¹⁷

Transubstantiation and consubstantiation contradict the completeness of the Lord's sacrifice once for all and the doctrine of justification by faith alone by imposing additional requirements to be saved.

The Reformed view also goes further than required or implied by Scripture. The Moody Handbook of Theology reports,

"Calvin taught that Christ is "present and enjoyed in His entire person, both body and blood. He emphasizes the mystical communion of believers with the entire person of the Redeemer....the body and blood of Christ, though absent and locally present only in heaven, communicate a life-giving influence to the believer. A problem with this view is that there is no explicit statement or inference from Scripture suggesting that grace is imparted to the participant."¹⁸

In conclusion, we come together in unity around the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 10:16-17, 11:2).

"The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a divinely appointed testimony from the believer's heart to God respecting his trust in Christ's efficacious death. As such it has nevertheless been greatly perverted, the Church of Rome having developed the unwarranted doctrine of transubstantiation. The Lutheran doctrine is to the effect that Christ must be present by omnipotent power in the elements—a blessing to believers and a condemnation to others.

The words, "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup" (1 Cor. 11:26), indicate the liberty under grace in any matter of times and seasons, that is, relative to frequency in partaking of the Lord's Supper. Here, then, is a testimony from the heart to God by which the Lord's death is shown forth, and one to continue "till he come" again (1 Cor. 11:26), as the Jewish altar set forth Christ's death until He came the first time."¹⁹

Praise God that He left us with ordinances, which are very significant symbols or types that point to the very momentous work of our Saviour: that is, first, through the type, "baptism,"

we remember (1) His First Coming, (2) His death, (3) His resurrection, and (4) His life. Therefore, if we are in the eternal life of the second Adam who is our advocate in heaven, then we have been saved from our sins, from wrath, and from being enemies of God. We can participate in His life here and now, and joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:8-11, Gal. 2:20). Second, through the type, the Lords Supper, we recall, (1) His suffering “for the joy set before him [that He] endured the cross [for us]” (Rom. 5:8-11, Heb. 12:2, 10), (2) His body was “broken for” us (1 Cor. 11:24), and (3) His blood shed for “the new testament” for us (1 Cor. 11:24-25). O’ the cleansing blood of the Lamb of God shed for us. Amen. Eternity will not be long enough to praise Him, to thank Him, to honor Him, and to love Him.

Endnotes:

¹Dr. Jeffery Khoo, Academic Dean, Far Eastern Bible College, *Heresies Ancient and Modern*, (Far Eastern Bible College, <http://www.febc.edu.sg/assets/pdfs/studyresource/Heresies.pdf>) 43, Dr. Khoo points out, as have MANY others, that the Roman Catholics reject “the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith alone,” and catechism #1257 teaches that baptism saves.

²Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 7 (Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, MI, Eight Volumes, 1993) pp. 34-42. Affusion relates to sprinkling or pouring water over a person for baptism.

³Joseph Imey, *History of the English Baptist* (London, Printed for the Author; Way of Life, Fundamental Baptist Library, 2003) 1811, Section by John Gill, *Divine Right of Infant Baptism Examined*.

⁴The Westminster Confession of Faith clearly rebukes this doctrine taught by Roman Catholics stating, “The grace which is exhibited in or by the sacraments rightly used, is not conferred by any power in them,” refuting transubstantiation and consubstantiation. Canons of Baptism 3, 5, 13 and Canons of the Sacrifice of the Mass 1, 2, 3, 5 of the Roman Catholic denomination from the Council of Trent, which have not been cancelled, promote this heretical doctrine. See *Rome and the Council of Trent* by Dr. David Cloud (Fundamental Baptist Information Service, FBIS, February 7, 2006).

⁵Dr. Douglas D. Stauffer, *One Book Rightly Divided*, (McCown Hill Publishers, Baton Rouge, LA, 2000) 80, Dr. Stauffer misses many important ideas, particularly subjective and objective genitives in the Greek Koine Text. See also, Dr. David Cloud, *Beware of Hyper-Dispensationalism* (Fundamental Baptist Information Service (FBIS), 11/25/05) “Some of the well-known teachers of hyper- or ultra-dispensationalism are E.W. Bullinger, Cornelius Stam, J.C. O’Hair, Charles Welch, Otis Sellers, A.E. Knoch, and Charles Baker.

⁶Dr. Roy Wallace, *Studies In Systematic Theology* (LinWel, Shreveport, LA, 2001) 254, Dr. Wallace is quoting Augustus H. Strong.

⁷Augustus Hopkins Strong, D.D., LL.D., *Systematic Theology, El Compendium* (Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, © 1907, 28th Printing, 1972) 930.

⁸See Strong’s 907, 911.

⁹Dr. Roy Wallace, Op. Cit., 255.

¹⁰George E. Rice, *Baptism In The Early Church* (Journal: Bible and Spade, Volume 10, 1981) 121

¹¹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Op. Cit., Also see Dr. Roy Wallace, Op. Cit., 254

¹²Dr. Roy Wallace, Op. Cit., 256

¹³William A. BeVier, *Water Baptism in the First Five Centuries—Part II* (Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 116) 230-231

¹⁴Luther B. McIntyre, *Baptism and Forgiveness* (Bibliotheca Sacra Volume 153) 53

¹⁵Ibid. Luther B. McIntyre, 63

¹⁶Dr. Roy Wallace, Op. Cit., 257

¹⁷Dr. Paul Enns, Moody Handbook of Theology, (Moody Press, Chicago, IL, 1989) 435

¹⁸Ibid. Dr. Paul Enns, 361

¹⁹Lewis Sperry Chafer, Op. Cit., Vol. 7, 229