

The Circumcision of Jesus

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

Look, we could train our youth this way [Proverbs 22:6], in a childlike way and playfully in the fear and honor of God. Then the First and Second Commandments might be well kept and in constant practice. Then some good might take root, spring up, and bear fruit. People would grow up whom an entire land might relish and enjoy. In addition, this would be the true way to bring up children well as long as they could be trained with kindness and delight. For children who must be forced with rods and blows will not develop into a good generation. At best they will remain godly under such treatment only as long as the rod is upon their backs [Proverbs 10:13].

But teaching the commandments in a childlike and playful way spreads its roots in the heart so that children fear God more than rods and clubs. This I say with such simplicity for the sake of the young, that it may penetrate their minds. For we are preaching to children, so we must also talk like them. In this way we would prevent the abuse of the divine name and teach the right use. This should happen not only in words, but also in practice and life. Then we may know God is well pleased with this and will as richly reward good use of His name as He will terribly punish the abuse....



HOLY BAPTISM

It is pure wickedness and blasphemy of the devil when our “new spirits” mock Baptism, leaving God’s Word and institution out of it. They look at Baptism in no other way than as water that is taken from the well. Then they blather and say, “How does a handful of water help the soul?” Yes, my friend, who does not know that water is water? (If tearing things apart is what we are after.) But how dare you interfere with God’s order? How dare you tear away the most precious treasure with which God has connected and enclosed Baptism, and that He will not allow to be separated? For the kernel in the water is God’s Word or command and God’s name. His name is a treasure greater and nobler than heaven and earth.

Understand the difference, then. Baptism is quite a different thing from all other water. This is not because of its natural quality but because something more noble is added here. God Himself stakes His honor, His power, and His might on it. Therefore, Baptism is not only natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water, and whatever other terms we can find to praise it. This is all because of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word, which no one can praise enough. For it has, and is able to do, all that God is and can do [Isaiah 55:10–11]. In this way it also gets its essence as a Sacrament, as St. Augustine also taught, “When the Word is joined to the element or natural substance, it becomes a Sacrament,” that is, a holy and divine matter and sign.

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