

Rorate Coeli

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

...See, here you have the meaning of the true honor and worship of God, which pleases God, and which He commands under penalty of eternal wrath. The heart knows no other comfort or confidence than in Him. It must not allow itself to be torn from Him. But, for Him, it must risk and disregard everything upon earth. On the other hand, you can easily see and sense how the world practices only false worship and idolatry. For no people have ever been so corrupt that they did not begin and continue some divine worship. Everyone has set up as his special god whatever he looked to for blessings, help, and comfort.

For example, the heathen who put their trust in power and dominion elevated Jupiter as the supreme god. Others, who were bent on riches, happiness, or pleasure, and a life of ease, elevated Hercules, Mercury, Venus, or other gods. Pregnant women elevated Diana or Lucina, and so on. So everyone made his god that interest to which his heart was inclined. So even in the mind of the heathen to have a god means to trust and believe. But their error is this: their trust is false and wrong. For their trust is not placed in the only God, beside whom there is truly no God in heaven or upon earth [Isaiah 44:6]. Therefore, the heathen really make their self-invented notions and dreams of God an idol. Ultimately, they put their trust in that which is nothing. So it is with all idolatry. For it happens not merely by erecting an image and worshiping it, but rather it happens in the heart. For the heart stands gaping at something else. It seeks help and consolation from creatures, saints, or devils. It neither cares for God, nor looks to Him for anything better than to believe that He is willing to help. The heart does not believe that whatever good it experiences comes from God [James 1:17]....

HOLY BAPTISM

Our would-be wise, “new spirits” assert that faith alone saves, and that works and outward things do nothing. We answer, “It is true, indeed, that nothing in us is of any use but faith, as we shall hear still further.” But these blind guides are unwilling to see this: faith must

have something that it believes, that is, of which it takes hold and upon which it stands and rests [1 Corinthians 2:5]. So faith clings to the water and believes that in Baptism, there is pure salvation and life. This is not through the water (as we have stated well enough), but through the fact that it is embodied in God’s Word and institution, and that God’s name abides in it. Now, if I believe this, what else is it than believing in God as the One who has given and planted His Word [Mark 4:14] into this ordinance and offers to us this outward thing by which we may gain such a treasure?

Now, these “new spirits” are so crazy that they separate faith and the object to which faith clings and is bound, even if it is something outward. Yes, it shall and must be something outward, so that it may be grasped by our senses and understood, and by them be brought into the heart. For indeed, the entire Gospel is an outward, verbal preaching. In short, what God does and works in us He intends to work through such outward ordinances. Therefore, wherever He speaks—indeed, no matter what direction or by whatever means He speaks—faith must look there. It must hold to that object. Now here we have the words “Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved” [Mark 16:16]. What else can these words refer to but Baptism, that is, to the water included in God’s ordinance? Therefore, it makes sense that whoever rejects Baptism rejects God’s Word, faith, and Christ, who directs us to Baptism and binds us to Baptism....

Further, we say that we are not very concerned to know whether the person baptized believes or not. For Baptism does not become invalid on that account. But everything depends on God’s Word and command. Now this point is perhaps somewhat difficult. But it rests entirely on what I have said, that Baptism is nothing other than water and God’s Word in and with each other. That is, when the Word is added to the water, Baptism is valid, even though faith is lacking. For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid even though it is wrongly received or used. As stated above, it is not bound to our faith, but to the Word.

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