

Philander Chase Letters

3-16-1843

Letter to Edward Benson

Philander Chase

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Jubilee College Mar 16-1884.

Dear Edward.

From a letter which you were so kind as to address to me a few days ago, I understand it is your wish to know whether that part of the Universal Church to which we belong considers baptism to be Regeneration or also whether she approves of Revivals - and lastly whether she admits persons without due preparation to the ordinances of God?

Much evil is often avoided by defining terms before we begin to talk of any important matter. What then is meant by baptism? Answer: It is a sacrament which in the Case of the Church "is an outward & visible sign of an inward & spiritual grace given unto us" ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same and a pledge to assure us thereof.

Question. How many parts are there in a sacrament? - Ans. Two - The outward and visible sign and the inward and spiritual grace.

Question. What is the outward and visible sign, or form in Baptism? Answer. "Water wherein the person is baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Question. What is the inward and spiritual grace? Answer. "A death unto sin & a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace."

From the above extracts it appears that Baptism is something Outward and also something inward. - As when we speak of man, we mean a body & a soul united. He is necessarily so while in this life. A soul without a body would be an angel or spirit; and a body without a soul would not be man but a corpse. In this way we would have it clearly understood that baptism merely outward is not Christian baptism in the sense of the Church, any more than a corpse can be called man in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Except something more than the idea of a corpse be attached to the word it is not man. Thus baptism of water only is not baptism in the ecclesiastical sense. It is like any other outward washing or "putting away of the filth of the flesh"; but is not Christian baptism.

I wish

I wish you to notice these remarks because of the many and great mistakes which flow from misapprehension in the use of terms. Mark it well that what the Church calls baptism is that which is spoken of in her catechisms both outward and inward - not only "an outward and visible sign" but an "inward spiritual grace given unto us." And herein she follows her blessed Master Jesus Christ when teaching Nicodemus the meaning of the New Birth, assuring him that it was not an outward work only, but an inward to be performed by the Spirit or breath of God, as the wind bloweth really tho' invisibly. Of the necessity of this he saith "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God."

For the further confirmation & explication of these truths I refer you to the 27th article of the Church as it is printed in the Prayer-book which the room left will not allow me to copy in this letter. By this you see that baptism is not only a sign of our profession but also of our Regeneration which as by an instrument ordered of Covenant "they that receive Baptism rightly are grafted into the Church." You will of course compraise the word "rightly", which doubtless was introduced to exclude all hypocrites & other wicked persons like Simon Magus; who though baptized by the Apostles had quenched the heavenly flame of God's Holy Spirit, by covetousness and thus prevented the true Regeneration of his soul; as seems to be implied by the words of the Apostle saying "Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter."

That the language of this article on baptism as above cited was both understood & adopted by other learned Christian reformers besides those of the Church of England seems by the description ^{which} of John Calvin gives of Christian baptism. He says: "It doth signify by and seal unto us our ingrafting into Christ, our Regeneration and our our Engagements to be the Lord's."

The term "Ingrafting" as used here by John Calvin & the Church of England and other Protestant divines seems to have had its common origin in the figure used by our blessed Saviour in the 15th Chap^r of St. John's Gospel "I am the true vine and my Father is the Husbandman. 5. Ye are

the branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit, for without me ye can do nothing".

The Branches of Christ The Vine, it is obvious are not such by nature, for there is corrupt and beneath no good fruit: "There is none that doth good no not one;" Since sin has entered into the world we all have become degenerated branches of a strange vine" Jer. 2. 21. — "If any good fruit we bear, it must be as branches as Christ The Vine But how are we made such? "By being born of water & of the Holy Ghost," saith our blessed Saviour. Baptism doth signify and seal unto us our ingrafting into Christ;" saith the learned Calvin. They that receive Baptism rightly are grafted unto the Church which is Christ's body" saith the Protestant Church of England of America and of Holland and of Germany.

The same doctrinal truths also doth the Holy Ghost witness in Gal: 3. 27. "for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ." Again 1. Cor. 12. 13. "For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body" again Rom: 6. 3. "Know ye not that so many of you as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death and again Ananias saith unto Saul of Tarsus after ward, the apostle Paul "Arise and be baptized and wash away thy sins".

So well supported is that part of the universal Church to which we belong, in saying that true baptism as we have defined it is Regeneration.

The Visible part is water; administered by an authorized Ambassador of Christ.

The Invisible part is a death unto sin and a New Birth unto righteousness: for being by nature born in sin and the children of wrath we are hereby made the children of Grace; No other baptism but this is allowed or counted lawful by the Church. This is Regeneration. The being born of water and the Spirit our Lord our definition of the New Birth.

And now dear Edward I must close for want of health to go further. I may resume the subject of this letter at another time.

In the mean time and ever believe me as I can most
sincerely

Your faithful Friend & Humble servant
in the Lord
William Chace

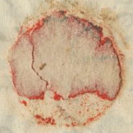
Mr. Edward Benson

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Noting me to Mr.
March 17th

per W. Chace 10/10

Mr. Edward Benson

Galesburg
Knox Co.
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Right Wm. Chace