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BAPTISM

BAPTISM of this sacrament, the act of baptism must be expressed, and the matter and form be united to leave no doubt of the meaning of the ceremony. In addition to the necessary word "baptize", or its equivalent, it is also obligatory to mention the separate persons of the Holy Trinity. This is the command of Christ to His Disciples, and as the sacrament has its efficacy from Him Who instituted it, we can not omit anything that He has prescribed. Nothing is more certain than that this has been the general understanding and practice of the Church. Tertullian tells us (De Bapt.,xiii): "The law of baptism (tigendi) has been imposed and the form prescribed: Go, teach the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost." St. Justin Martyr (Apol., I) testifies to the practice in his time. St. Ambrose (De Myst., IV) declares: "Unless a person has been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, he can not obtain the remission of his sins." St. Cyprian (Ad Jubaian.), rejecting the validity of baptism given in the name of Christ only, affirms that the naming of all the persons of the Trinity was commanded by the Lord (in plena et adunato Trinitate). The same is declared by many other primitive Writers, as St. Jerome (IV, in Matt.), Origen (De Princ., i, ii), St. Athanasius (Or. iv, Gontr. Ar.), St. Augustine (De Bapt., vi, 25). It is not, of course, absolutely necessary that the common names Father, Son, and Holy Ghost be used, provided the persons be expressed by words that are equivalent or synonymous.

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The mind of the Church as to the necessity of observing the trinitarian formula in this sacrament has been clearly shown by her treatment of baptism conferred by heretics. Any ceremony that did not observe this form has been declared invalid. The Montanists baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and Montanus and Priscilla (St. Basil, Ep. I, Ad Amphil.). As a consequence, the Council of Laodicea ordered their rebaptism. The Arians at the time of the Council of Nicea do not seem to have tampered with the baptismal formula, for that Council does not order their rebaptism. When, then, St. Athanasius (Or. ii, Contr. Ar.) and St. Jerome (Contra Lact.) declare the Arians to have baptized in the name of the Creator and creatures, they must either refer to their doctrine or to a later changing of the sacramental form. It is well known that the latter was the case with the Spanish Arians and that consequently converts from the sect were rebaptized. The Anomoeans, a branch of the Arians, baptized with the formula: "In the name of the uncreated God and in the name of the created Son, and in the name of the Sanctifying Spirit, procreated by the created Son" (Epiphanius, Hæret., lxxvii). Other Arian sects, such as the Eunomians and Actians, baptized "in the death of Christ". Converts from Sabellianism were ordered by the First Council of Constantinople (can. vii) to be rebaptized because the doctrine of Sabellius that there was but one person in the Trinity had infected their baptismal form. The two sects sprung from Paul of Samosata, who denied Christ's Divinity, likewise conferred invalid baptism. They were the Paulianists and Photinians. Pope Innocent I (Ad. Episc. Maced., vi) declares that these sectaries did not distinguish the Persons of the Trinity when baptizing. The Council of Nicea (can. xix) ordered the rebaptism of Paulianists, and

the Council of Arles (can. xvi and xvii) decreed the same for both Paulianists and Photinians.

There has been a theological controversy over the question as to whether baptism in the name of Christ only was ever held valid. Certain texts in the New Testament have given rise to this difficulty. Thus St. Paul (Acts, xix) commands some disciples at Ephesus to be baptized in Christ's name: "They were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus." In Acts, x, we read that St. Peter ordered others to be baptized "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ". Those who were converted by Philip (Acts, viii) "were baptized in the name of Jesus Christ", and above all we have the explicit command of the Prince of the Apostles: "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins" (Acts, ii). Owing to these texts some theologians have held that the Apostles baptized in the name of Christ only. St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, and Albertus Magnus are invoked as authorities for this opinion, they declaring that the Apostles so acted by special dispensation. Other writers, as Peter Lombard and Hugh of St. Victor, hold also that such baptism would be valid, but say nothing of a dispensation for the Apostles. The most probable opinion, however, seems to be that the terms "in the name of Jesus", "in the name of Christ", either refer to baptism in the faith taught by Christ, or are employed to distinguish Christian baptism from that of John the Precursor. It seems altogether unlikely that immediately after Christ had solemnly promulgated the trinitarian formula of baptism, the Apostles themselves would have substituted another. In fact, the words of St. Paul (Acts, xix) imply quite plainly that they did not. For, when some Christians at Ephesus declared that they had never heard of the Holy Ghost, the Apostle asks: "In whom then were you baptized?" This text certainly seems to declare that St. Paul took it for granted that the Ephesians must have heard the name of the Holy Ghost when the sacramental formula of baptism was pronounced over them.

The authority of Pope Stephen I has been alleged for the validity of baptism given in the name of Christ only. St. Cyprian says (Ep. ad Jubaian.) that this pontiff declared all baptism valid provided it was given in the name of Jesus Christ. It must be noted that the same explanation applies to Stephen's words as to the Scriptural texts above given. Moreover, Firmilian, in his letter to St. Cyprian, implies that Pope Stephen required an explicit mention of the Trinity in baptism, for he quotes the pontiff as declaring that the sacramental grace is conferred because a person has been baptized "with the invocation of the names of the Trinity, Father and Son and Holy Ghost". A passage that is very difficult of explanation is found in the works of St. Ambrose (Lib. I, De Sp. S., iii), where he declares that if a person names one of the Trinity, he names all of them: "If you say Christ, you have designated God the Father, by whom the Son was anointed, and Him Who was anointed Son, and the Holy Ghost in whom He was anointed." This passage has been generally interpreted as referring to the faith of the catechumen, but not to the baptismal form. More difficult is the explanation of the response of Pope Nicholas I to the Bulgarians (cap. civ; Labbe, VIII), in which he states that a person is not to be rebaptized who has already been baptized "in the name of the Holy Trinity or in the name of Christ only, as we read in the Acts of the Apostles (for it is one and the same thing, as St. Ambrose has explained)". As in the passage to which the pope alludes, St. Ambrose was speaking of the faith of the recipient of baptism, as we have already stated, it has been held probable that this is also the meaning that Pope Nicholas intended his words to convey (see another explanation in Pesch, Prælect. Dogm., VI, no. 389). What seems to confirm this is

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