

great in the mystical body of Christ, he should detract the Sacrament from the body which He took of the Blessed Virgin. Who has ever seen any man swell with greater pride for so frivolous a gloss? For if the Apostle had been of his opinion, and willing his words should be so interpreted as to show this Sacrament to be great only in Christ and His Church, without any reference at all to the marriage of man and wife; it would lessen the force of the weight of all those things, whereby, in that comparison of all those things, whereby, in that comparison of the two conjunctions, he had before commended marriage” (pp. 372, 374).

“But his (Luther’s) denying Orders to be a Sacrament, is as it were the fountain of all the rest; which, being once stopped up, the other small springs must of necessity come dry of themselves. ‘This Sacrament (says he) is not known to the Church of Christ, but has been invented by the Church of the Pope.’ In these few words are contained a great heap of absurdities and lies: for he makes distinction between Christ’s Church, and the Pope’s; whereas the Pope is Christ’s Vicar, in that, over which Christ is the head. He says the Church invented; when it has received it as already instituted, and therefore has not invented it. ‘This Sacrament (he says) is unknown to the Church of Christ;’ whereas it is most certain, that all parts of the world, which have the true faith of Christ, have orders for a Sacrament” (p. 398).

“Otherwise, if Luther persists in his distinction of the Pope’s Church, from Christ’s; and in saying that the one has Orders for a Sacrament, the other not; let him shew us the Church of Christ, which, contrary to the faith of the Papal Church, (as he calls it) knows not the Sacrament of Order. In the meanwhile it appears evidently, that, by asserting this Sacrament to be unknown to the Church of Christ, and that they are not of Christ’s Church who are governed by the Pope; he separates, by both these reasons, from Christ’s Church, not only

Rome, but also all Italy, Germany, Spain, France, Britain, and all other nations, which obey the See of Rome; or have Orders for a Sacrament. Which people, being by him taken from the Church of Christ; it consequently follows, that he must either confess Christ’s Church to be in no place at all, or else, like the Donatists, he must reduce the Catholic Church to two or three heretics whispering in a corner” (00 398, 400).

“All men do unanimously confess (Luther only accepted) that the Apostles were by our Savior ordained Priests at His Last Supper; where it plainly appears, that power was giver to them to consecrate the Body of Christ, which power the Priest alone hath. ‘But says Luther, it is not a Sacrament, because there is no grace promised therein.’ But pray, how, or whence he has this knowledge? ‘Because (says he) it is not read in the Scripture!’ This is his usual consequence: ‘It is not written in the Gospels, therefore has it not been done by Christ.’ Which form of reasoning the Evangelist overthrows, when he says, ‘Many things were done, which are not written in this book’” (pp. 404, 406).

Continued in part three, pamphlet 154.



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Pamphlet 153

Henry VII’s Defense of the Sacraments

Part Two

(Continued from part one, pamphlet 152)

In 1521, just four years after supposedly posting his famous “Ninety-five theses” on a church door in Wittenberg, and the same month he was excommunicated, Martin Luther published a controversial work called *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church*. This book denounced the seven sacraments as corruptions and papist inventions. When Luther’s book reached England, Thomas More, in refutation of Luther’s work, composed a high quality theological treatise called *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum contra Martinum Lutherum* (“In Defense of the Seven Sacraments Against Martin Luther”). King Henry claimed authorship of the book and was given the title Defender of the Faith by the Pope. In gratitude, King Henry raised More to a Peer of the Realm and he became Sir Thomas More.

The treatise challenged the Martin Luther’s heretical opinions on the seven sacraments and was presented to Pope Clement VII in October 1521. Henry was subsequently named *Defensor fidei* (“Defender of the Faith”) by the Roman pontiff—a title still claimed by English monarchs to this day.

Luther responded with the German *Response to the Book of King Henry*, which was filled with vulgar, personal attacks on the king. The King didn’t want to dignify the German Response with a direct reply. Therefore, Sir Thomas More, who was then Henry’s Lord Chancellor and one of the leaders of the Catholic humanist party in England, was chosen to refute Luther’s arguments and defend the King’s honor. In 1523, More produced his first major work of apologetics, *Response to Luther*, under the pen name “William Ross.”

Henry called Luther a prevaricator, a corrupter of the Testament, a labyrinth of stupidity, a destroyer of both soul and body, a little know-it-all, and a pest to be avoided.

In the “*Defense...*”, Henry (More) defended with heart and soul the independence of the Holy See until the Pope forbid him to divorce his lawful wife. Queen Catherine, in order to marry Anne Boleyn. Goaded on by his unbridled sensuality and encouraged by his many servile, self-seeking flatterers Henry tore away from the Church and became its bloodthirsty persecutor.

In spite of his later crimes, he did not alter his Defense of the Seven Sacraments. We still possess it at it was sent to the Holy Father. Since it was written in Luther’s time it undoubtedly furnishes some valuable and interesting information. For this reason a few extracts are given here from *Assertio Septem Sacramentorum; or Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, by Henry VIII, King of England, Edited by Louis O’Donovan, Benziger Brothers, Inc. New York, 1908.

Continued from part one

“Now let anyone judge of the truth of Luther’s opinion, who, contrary to the sentiments of all the holy Fathers, draws the Keys of the Church to the laity, and to women; and says, that these words of Christ, ‘Whatsoever you shall bind, etc.’ are spoken not only to Priests, but also to all the faithful. Marcus Aemilius Scaurus, a man most excellent, and known for honesty, being accused at Rome to the people by Varius Sucronesis a man of little sincerity; his accuser having made a long and tedious discourse; Scaurus confidently relying on the judgment of the people, not thinking his worthy of an answer, said, Roman, Varius Sucronesis says it, Aemilius Scaurus denies it; which of them do you believe? By which words the people, applauding this honorable man, scorned the idle accusations of the babbling adversary. Which discourse seems not

more applicable to them, than to what we hear state: for Luther says, that the words of Christ concerning the Keys are spoken to the laity; St. Augustine denies it: which of them is rather to be believed? Luther affirms, Bede denies; which of them will you believe? Luther affirms, St. Ambrose denies; which of them has the greater credit? Finally, Luther affirms it, and the whole Church denies it; which do you think to be believed? But if anybody be so mad, as to believe with Luther, that he ought to confess himself to a woman; perhaps it may not be amiss for him also to follow the other opinion of Luther; in which he persuades us, not to be too careful in calling to mind our sins” (p. 336, 338).

“(Luther says), ‘That God does nothing regard out works, nor has any need of them: but he has need that we should esteem him true in his promise.’ What Luther meant by these words, he knows best himself. For my part, I believe that God cares for our faith and our works, and the He stands in need of neither our faith, nor our works. For though God has no want of our goods, yet has He so much care of what we do, that He commands some things to be done, and forbids other things: without whose care, not so much as one sparrow falls to the earth, five of which are sold for two farthings” (p. 348).

“That Luther may understand that this Sacrament is no new thing, or vain fiction; but that it is so far from being void of grace, that it confers the Spirit of grace and truth: we will here relate what St. Hierom has written of this Sacrament of Confirmation. ‘If the bishop impose his hands, it is on them who have been baptized in the true faith, who have believed in the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three persons and one substance. But the Arian, who believes in no other (stop your ears, that you may not be polluted with the words of such monstrous impiety), but in the Father alone, in Jesus Christ as a creature, in the Holy Ghost as servant to both; how shall he receive the Holy Ghost from the Church, who has not as yet obtained remission of his sins? For the Holy Ghost

inhabits not, but where faith is pure, nor remains but in that Church which has true faith for her guide. If is this place, you ask why he that is baptized in the Church, receives not the Holy Ghost but by the hands of the bishop? Learn, that this observation is descended from this authority; because, after our Lord’s ascension, the Holy Ghost descended on the Apostles, and we find the same to have been done in many places.’ Hitherto St Hierom. Which sentence is also confirmed by divers passages in the Scripture, and particularly, by that in the Acts, which shews that the people baptized before in Samaria, received the Holy Ghost, when Peter and John came among them, and laid their hands upon them. I, therefore, admire how it should come into Luther’s mind to dispute, that Confirmation is only to be accounted a rite and a ceremony, and deny it to be a Sacrament; when it is demonstrated, not only be the testimony of holy Fathers, and by the faith of the whole Church, but also by clear passages of Scripture; that not only grace, but also the very Spirit of Grace, is conferred by the visible sign of the bishop’s imposition of hands. Let Luther therefore forbear to condemn any more the Sacrament of Confirmation, which the dignity of the minister, the authority of the Church, and the profit of the Sacrament itself, commend” (pp. 360, 362).

“This Sacrament, saith the Apostle, is great in Christ and the Church. How could he have more evidently refuted Luther, than by these words, which he so impertinently scoffs at, in contending that the Apostle had taken away the Sacrament from the marriage of man and wife, by saying,

‘This Sacrament is great in Christ and His Church?’ As if he should, by saying, the Sacrament of baptism is great in the washing of the soul, deny the baptism of the body to be a Sacrament; or, as if he should, by saying, the Sacrament of the Eucharist is great in the body of Christ, deny the species of bread and wine to be a Sacrament is