

The Post-Apostolic Church's Stance

on

Water Baptism

It is advised that this document be read in conjunction with the podcast series brought by Dr Ester Blomerus on Matt. 28.19 in comparison with Acts 2.38 (Website Ref. No. AD-0060)

With reference to the Catholic Teachings re the so-called heretical baptism, namely, ".... and Antichrist baptizes in the name of Christ...." it seems this quotation again brings to our attention the rift that had existed at the time between those following in the first-century tradition, namely the Jewish Christians or, for that matter, their converts, as "in the name of Christ" seems to be, in this particular instance, "in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Son", i.e. then over against the subtle Catholic stance, "... for Christ said in His Name..." generally linked to the Catholic baptismal ritual (Math. 28.19).

We must, however, keep in mind that those opposing the Catholic Church's dogmatic rulings and stances were regarded as outcasts and they would then indeed have been portrayed in a harsh way. Calvin's description of Michael Servetus shows a resemblance to the former type of description, i.e. of so-called heretics, only the latter's verbal attack was much more stronger. On the so-called "true baptism", the following extract on the relative website: "Primus of Misgirpa said: I decide, that every man who comes to us from heresy must be baptized. For in vain does he think that he has been baptized there, seeing that there is no baptism save the one and true baptism in the Church; because not only is God one, but the faith is one, and the Church is one, wherein stands the one baptism, and holiness, and the rest. For whatever is done without, has no effect of salvation". Note that this "baptism of the Church" was nothing but the baptism in the threefold Name of the Godhead (Math. 28.19). The other form of baptism was, as it seems, then regarded as its counterpart, namely the baptism in the Name of Jesus (Acts 2.38). See : <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0508.htm> (4/8/2012):

The following again is an extract helping us to acquire an understanding of the Catholic Church's (triune) stance on water baptism:

"The Seventh Council of Carthage Under Cyprian.

(<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0508.htm> Copied Saturday, 11.28 , 4 Aug. 2012).

Concerning the Baptism of Heretics. The Judgment of Eighty-Seven Bishops on the Baptism of Heretics.

Prooemium.— When Stephen, Bishop of Rome, Had by His Letters Condemned the Decrees of the African Council on the Baptism of Heretics, Cyprian Lost No Time in Holding

Another Council at Carthage with a Greater Number of Bishops. Having Therefore Summoned Eighty-Seven Bishops from Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania, Who Assembled at Carthage in the Kalends of September, a.d. 258, This Third Council on the Same Matter of Baptism Was Then Celebrated; At the Beginning of Which, After, the Letters on Either Side Had Been Read, Cyprian, by Implication, Condemns the Assumption of Stephen.

When, in the kalends of September, a great many bishops from the provinces of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania, had met together at Carthage, together with the presbyters and deacons, and a considerable part of the congregation who were also present; and when the letter of Jubaianus written to Cyprian had been read, as also the reply of Cyprian to Jubaianus, about baptizing heretics, and what the same Jubaianus had subsequently rejoined to Cyprian,— Cyprian said: You have heard, my dearly beloved colleagues, what Jubaianus our co-bishop has written to me, taking counsel of my poor intelligence concerning the unlawful and profane baptism of heretics, as well as what I wrote in answer to him, decreeing, to wit, what we have once and again and frequently determined, that heretics who come to the Church must be baptized and sanctified by the baptism of the Church. Moreover, another letter of Jubaianus has also been read to you, wherein, replying, in accordance with his sincere and religious devotion, to my letter, he not only acquiesced in what I had said, but, confessing that he had been instructed thereby, he returned thanks for it. It remains, that upon this same matter each of us should bring forward what we think, judging no man, nor rejecting any one from the right of communion, if he should think differently from us. For neither does any of us set himself up as a bishop of bishops, nor by tyrannical terror does any compel his colleague to the necessity of obedience; since every bishop, according to the allowance of his liberty and power, has his own proper right of judgment, and can no more be judged by another than he himself can judge another. But let us all wait for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only one that has the power both of preferring us in the government of His Church, and of judging us in our conduct there.

Caecilius of Bilta said: I know only one baptism in the Church, and none out of the Church. This one will be here, where there is the true hope and the certain faith. For thus it is written: One faith, one hope, one baptism; Ephesians 4:5 not among heretics, where there is no hope, and the faith is false, where all things are carried on by lying; where a demoniac exorcises; where one whose mouth and words send forth a cancer puts the sacramental interrogation; the faithless gives faith; the wicked bestows pardon of sins; and Antichrist baptizes in the name of Christ; he who is cursed of God blesses; he who is dead promises life; he who is unpeaceful gives peace; the blasphemer calls upon God; the profane person administers the office of the priesthood; the sacrilegious person establishes an altar. In addition to all these things, there is also this evil, that the priests of the devil dare to celebrate the Eucharist; or else let those who stand by them say that all these things concerning heretics are false. Behold to what kind of things the Church is compelled to consent, and is constrained without baptism, without pardon of sins, to hold communion. And this thing, brethren, we ought to flee from and avoid, and to separate ourselves from so great a wickedness, and to hold one baptism, which is granted by the Lord to the Church alone.

Primus of Misgirpa said: I decide, that every man who comes to us from heresy must be baptized. For in vain does he think that he has been baptized there, seeing that there is no baptism save the one and true baptism in the Church; because not only is God one, but the faith is one, and the Church is one, wherein stands the one baptism, and holiness, and the rest. For whatever is done without, has no effect of salvation.

Polycarp from Adrumetum said: They who approve the baptism of heretics make void our baptism.

Novatus of Thamugada said: Although we know that all the Scriptures give witness concerning the saving baptism, still we ought to declare our faith, that heretics and

schismatics who come to the Church, and appear to have been falsely baptized, ought to be baptized in the everlasting fountain; and therefore, according to the testimony of the Scriptures, and according to the decree of our colleagues, men of most holy memory, that all schismatics and heretics who are converted to the Church must be baptized; and moreover, that those who appeared to have been ordained must be received among lay people.

Nemesianus of Thubunae said: That the baptism which heretics and schismatics bestow is not the true one, is everywhere declared in the Holy Scriptures, since their very leading men are false Christs and false prophets, as the Lord says by Solomon: He who trusts in that which is false, he feeds the winds; and the very same, moreover, follows the flight of birds. For he forsakes the ways of his own vineyard, he has wandered from the paths of his own little field. But he walks through pathless places, and dry, and a land destined for thirst; moreover, he gathers together fruitless things in his hands. And again: Abstain from strange water, and from the fountain of another do not drink, that you may live a long time; also that the years of life may be added to you. Proverbs 9:19 And in the Gospel our Lord Jesus Christ spoke with His divine voice, saying, Unless a man be born again of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. John 3:5 This is the Spirit which from the beginning was borne over the waters; for neither can the Spirit operate without the water, nor the water without the Spirit. Certain people therefore interpret for themselves ill, when they say that by imposition of the hand they receive the Holy Ghost, and are thus received, when it is manifest that they ought to be born again in the Catholic Church by both sacraments. Then indeed they will be able to be sons of God, as says the apostle: Taking care to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, as you have been called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God. Ephesians 4:3-6 All these things speaks the Catholic Church.....

Munnulus of Girba said: The truth of our Mother the Catholic Church, brethren, has always remained and still remains with us, and even especially in the Trinity of baptism, as our Lord says, Go and baptize the nations, in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Matthew 28:19 Since, then, we manifestly know that heretics have not either Father, or Son, or Holy Spirit, they ought, when they come to the Church our Mother, truly to be born again and to be baptized; that the cancer which they had, and the anger of damnation, and the witchery of error, may be sanctified by the holy and heavenly layer.

Another Secundinus of Carpi said: Are heretics Christians or not? If they are Christians, why are they not in the Church of God? If they are not Christians, how come they to make Christians? Or whither will tend the Lord's discourse, when He says, He that is not with me is against me, and he who gathers not with me scatters? Matthew 12:30 Whence it appears plain that upon strange children, and on the offspring of Antichrist, the Holy Ghost cannot descend only by imposition of hands, since it is manifest that heretics have not baptism.

Victoricus of Thabraca said: If heretics are allowed to baptize and to give remission of sins, wherefore do we brand them with infamy and call them heretics?

Quietus of Baruch said: We who live by faith ought to obey with careful observance those things which before have been foretold for our instruction. For it is written in Solomon: He that is baptized from the dead, (and again touches the dead,) what avails his washing? Sirach 34:25 which certainly speaks of those who are washed by heretics, and of those that wash them. For if those who are baptized among them obtain by remission of their sins life eternal, why do they come to the Church? But if from a dead person no salvation is received, and therefore, acknowledging their previous error, they return to the truth with penitence, they ought to be sanctified with the one vital baptism which is in the Catholic Church.

Natalis of Oëa said: As well I who am present, as Pompey of Sabrata, as also Dioga of Leptis

Magna — who, absent indeed in body, but present in spirit, have given me charge— judge the same as our colleagues, that heretics cannot hold communion with us, unless they shall be baptized with ecclesiastical baptism.

Junius of Neapolis said: From the judgment which we once determined on I do not recede, that we should baptize heretics who come to the Church.....

Cyprian of Carthage said: The letter which was written to our colleague Jubaianus very fully expresses my opinion, that, according to evangelical and apostolic testimony, heretics, who are called adversaries of Christ and Antichrists, when they come to the Church, must be baptized with the one baptism of the Church, that they may be made of adversaries, friends, and of Antichrists, Christians.

COMMENTARY BY ESTER BLOMERUS:

As the Catholic Church is historically the Mother Church of the majority of Christians, i.e. up until the Reformation, I feel that it is only right to quote the aforementioned historical records on the baptism debate as this clearly gives us an idea that the Mother Church's clergy indeed regarded her as the sole authority on the "correct" form of baptism, namely in accordance with Math. 28.19. This then was the type of reasoning our forebears who sometimes had to undergo forced conversion, would have been acquainted with. This historical record also implicitly lays it in our mouths that the baptism in the Name of Jesus was indeed regarded as the opposing, heretical form of baptism. There are only two baptism rituals recorded in our New Testament, and that is (1) from Math. 28.19 and (2) from Acts 2.38. How the baptism ritual was performed, i.e. regardless of all the diverse rituals that may have individually been practised by those sects operating outside the Catholic fold, is not important here as it is the baptismal formulae that is now at stake, namely, (1) in the threefold Name of the Godhead (Math. 28.19) and, (2) in the Name of the Son only (Acts 2.38).

What therefore should be clear from the aforesaid summary of the various Catholic leadership's viewpoints on baptism, is that all alternative baptismal forms were rejected, and apart from Acts 2.38, especially those not performed by a Catholic spiritual leader - strictly in accordance with Math. 28.19. It then seems that Acts 2.38, definitely a baptism that would also have been labelled as "alternative to Math. 28.19", and although inscribed in the Acts of the Apostles, was then also not regarded as true baptism!

Those who were then accepted in the Catholic fold, although initially baptized by so-called heretics who were functioning outside the domains of the Catholic Church, were then "baptized", yet not in the true sense of the word "rebaptized", as rebaptism would then not even have been a question as such a baptism was not to be accepted by mainline Mother Church.

We then have all the evidence we need to draw sound conclusions, namely that the baptism in the Name of Jesus (Acts 2.38) although not really named "heretical" per se, was indeed grouped along with the heretical forms of baptism as only one baptism was propagated as authentic and traditional and that is Math. 28.19! What is of course also clear is that there is indeed also a strong resemblance between the Essene tradition and the Catholic Church when it comes to baptism as water is clearly also linked to the Spirit and the Spirit in return with the Mother (the Church) who clearly was regarded as the sole authority on "Christian" dogma.

It is then no wonder that the Reformation was brought in action and clearly by none other

than Jesus Himself! As with such authoritarian control, not only words and doctrines of the opposition could have been distorted, but any idea contrary to that of the Mother Church's ruling dogma would have had little chance of survival! It also seems from the extract that their could still have been people who were baptized in the Holy Spirit at the time and which then would have been a phenomenon that was rejected by the Mother Church. Note quotations from the Old Testament Apocrypha which of course formed part of the Septuagint and which was also accepted by the Hellenistic Church (Rome). Mainline Judaism rejected the pseudepigrapha but it appears as if especially the Essenes honoured them as authentic Scripture. It further seems that the Latin tradition was the one that upheld and promoted the Trinitarian doctrine, which again seems to have blended well with the mindset of the Greekspeaking Jews who of course were apt to argue vehemently with the Apostle Paul (Acts 6). It seems that the label, "ecclesiastical" baptism meant the baptism recorded in Math. 28.19.

Munnulus of Girba's statements clearly points to a Trinitarian tradition that seemingly has had a long history at the time this Council was convened and Africa was then not only the cradle of the Mother worship, but the Trinity seems to have had a strong support here too. All Christians clearly just had to join the Mother Church or else they were lost. The Essenes were the ones who were indeed taken with the label, "sons of God", and perhaps those ones from Egypt and Northern Africa.

Philosophy further promoted the idea that no name could be given to God and it is no wonder that Jesus was regarded as a "common" name and especially where the Jewish Christian community preached it as the Name which wrought Salvation in and through the Cross of Calvary. It further seems Pope Stephen who died as a martyr, upheld the baptism according to Acts 2.38 which historical incidence shows that the baptism was still at the time a contentious issue. It seems this Council, along with the Council of Arles held in 314 A.D., had brought the final death blow to Peter's command (Acts 2.38).

It seems that the Hellenistic Jews, also the Essenes, had a connection with Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom and it is indeed there where a second Temple, that is apart from Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, was built (2 Mac. 6.2), and which was named the "Temple in Gerizim". It was also this very same heathen Temple which was later officially, and at the request of the inhabitants, named, "Temple of Zeus, the God of Hospitality", something that seemingly characterized the Essenes. There is of course also an idea that the Name of Jesus was linked to Zeus, a falacy that has in our day and age also seems to have surfaced among some Jewish Christian communities. The Name of Jesus could perhaps, as a result of this type of connotation, have been removed in preference to an unknown, unspeakable Name, similar to the Jewish stance on the Name of God. It was indeed the Essenes who had an obsession with the forbidden vocalization of the Sacred Name. And concerning Carthage, it was of course historically linked with the Phoenicians who again had strong affinities with the Baal worship which in return always had strong cultic ties with the Babylonian civilization. Geographic influences are then something we must also consider as this seemingly had an impact on the mindset of especially the North African spiritual leadership of the day.

In conclusion: What is clearly important for us to keep in mind is that we must understand that "heretical" was clearly a label that was quickly given to those who had the courage to oppose the Mother Church's teachings and seemingly, the brotherhood that had emerged from Carthage.

4 August 2012

References to the Podcast series on Math. 28.19 compared to Acts 2.38 - See AD-0060 on website

- BAINTON R.H., *Erasmus of Christendom*, Collins, Great Britain, 1969
- BARNARD, Justin Martyr, *His Life and Thought*, Cambridge University.
- BLOMERUS ESTER, *Die Christelike Geloof, Sy Grondslag en Ontplooing*, (PDF publication, 2004, First Revision 2010, 2nd impression, consisting of a bookseries), Swellendam, RSA. See Profile : <http://www.housealtarnetwork.com> (Documents, Spiritual and Biblical Enrichment Program)
- BLOMERUS ESTER, *Two Baptismal Commands, The Road to Confusion*, Venster Publications, Caledon, RSA.
- CARRINGTON, Phillip, *The Early Christian Church*, The Syndics of the Cambridge University Press, London, N.W.1, 1957; Vol II.
- GINSBURG, Christian D, *The Essenes, Their History and Doctrines*, first published in 1864, An Essay by Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd
- GINSBURG, Christian D, *The Kabbalah, Its Doctrines, Development and Literature, An Essay*, first published in 1863 by Longmans, Green and Co. Ltd.
- JAMES M.R. *The Apocryphal New Testament - newly translated - Oxford University Press, London 1966*
- LEBRETON J. *Gnosticism, Marcionism, and Manichaeism*, C..T.S. 38/40 Eccleston Square, London S.W.1
- McGIFFERT, A.C., *A History of Christianity in the Apostolic Age*, T & T Clark, Edinburgh, 1st Impression, Great Britain, 1897.
- RIEU E.V. *The four Gospels, new translation from the Greek*, Penquin Books, Willaim Clowes & Sons Limited, London, 1952
- RIEU C.H. *The Acts of the Apostles, translated with an introduction and notes by*, Penquin Books, R & R Clark Limited, Edinburgh, Great Britain, 1957.
- WILSON, R. McL., *The Gnostic Problem*; Second Impression; A.R. Mowbray & Co. Ltd.; London, 1958.
- WILSON R., McL., *Gnosis & The New Testament*; Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1968.
- WILSON, A.N., *Jesus*; London, 1992.
- WILSON, Edmund, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (1947-1969); A Revised and expanded version of *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea*, by W.H. Allen (1969); re-issued by Fount Paperbacks, Made and Printed in Great Britain by William Collins Sons & Co. Ltd., Glasgow, 1985.

I also would like to refer you to the excellent academic work of William W. Combs, Academic Dean and Professor of New Testament at Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary in Allen Park, MI, [Erasmus and the Textus Receptus \(http://www.dbts.edu/journals/1996/1/erasmus.pdf\)](http://www.dbts.edu/journals/1996/1/erasmus.pdf)

<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm#IV> (On Baptism, See "Form").
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02258b.htm> - The Catholic Triune Form of Baptism
<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0508.htm> (4/8/2012):