

his foolish hope; or rather his mad pride; who, seeing so many obstructions before him, as he himself mentions, brings nothing with him, whereby to remove the least; but seems as if he would go about to pierce a rock with a reed. For he sees, and confesses himself, that the opinions of the Holy Fathers are against him, as also the Canon of the Mass, with the custom of the universal Church, confirmed by the usage of so many ages, and the consent of so many people” (p. 254).

“Luther so much commends faith to us, as not only to permit us to abstain from good works; but also encourages us to commit any kind of action, ho bad soever: ‘For (says he) you see how rich the baptized man is, who cannot lose his salvation, though willing to do it, by any sin whatsoever, except infidelity; for no sins can damn him, but only incredulity.’ O most impious doctrine, and mistress of all impiety! So hateful in itself to pious ears, that there is no need to confute it: adultery will not damn them! Murder will not damn! Perjury will not damn! Is not parricide damnable either, if everyone believe that he shall be saved, through the virtue of the promise alone in baptism? For this he openly asserts; nor do the words, which he presently adds, correct his sentence in ay wise; but rather add to the force of it. For he saith, ‘That all things, if faith return, or stand in the divine promise made by the baptized, are swallowed up in a moment in the same faith; rather by the faith of God, for he cannot deny himself, if you confess him, and stick faithfully to his promise.’ By these words, what else does he say, but what has been said before, that, ‘Infidelity excepted, all other crimes are in a moment swallowed up be faith alone; if you confess Christ, and stick faithfully to his promise;’ that is, if you faithfully believe that you are to be saved by faith, whatsoever you do notwithstanding. And that you may less doubt what he aims at, ‘Contrition (says he) and confession of sins, as also satisfaction, and all these human inventions, will forsake you, and leave you the more unhappy, if you busy yourself with them forgetting this divine truth.’ What truth pray? ‘This that no sins can damn thee, but infidelity only.’ What Christian ears can with patience here the pestilentious hissing of this serpent, by which he extols baptism, for no

other end but to depress penance, and establish the grace of baptism for the free liberty of sinning? Contrary to what is that sentence of St. Hierom, which says that” Penance is the table after shipwreck.’ But agrees not with Luther; for he denys sin to be a ship-wreck of faith, and disputes it, as if that only word should totally destroy all the strength of faith. But besides Luther, who is ignorant that the sinner not only is not saved by the only faith of baptism, but also that the baptism will add to his damnation? And indeed deservedly; because he has offended God, from whom he had the whole grace of baptism, and God exacts the more from him to whom he has given the more: therefore since faith becomes dead by wicked works, why can it not be said, that he suffers ship-wreck who falls from the grace of God, into the hands of the devil? From which without penance he cannot escape, or be renewed to such a condition that baptism may be profitable to him: (Pp. 300, 302).

“It troubles me exceedingly to hear how absurd, how impious, and how contradictory to themselves the trifles and babbles are, wherewith Luther bespatters the Sacrament of Penance” (p. 318).

Continued in part two, pamphlet 141.

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Pamphlet 140

Henry VIII’s Defense of the seven sacraments

Part one



King Henry VIII
1491-1547

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.

"Let us therefore begin where he began himself, with the adorable Sacrament of Christ's Body. The changing of the name thereof, calling it, 'The Sacrament of Bread,' shows that this man cannot well endure, that we should be put in mind of Christ's Body, by the name of the Blessed Sacrament; and that, if under any fair pretext, it were possible for him, he would give it a worse name. How much differs the judgment of St. Ambrose from this man's when he says, 'Though the form of bread and wine is seen upon the altar, yet we must believe, that there is nothing else but the Body and Blood of Christ'; by which words it clearly appears, that St. Ambrose confesses no other substance to remain with the Body and Blood of Christ in the Sacrament, when he says, 'That which is seen under the form of bread and wine, is nothing else but the Body and Blood of Christ.' If St. Ambrose had only said Flesh and

Blood, without adding anything more, perhaps Luther would have said, that the bread and wine were there also; as Luther himself says, 'That the substance of the Flesh is with the bread, and the substance of the Blood along with the wine'; but seeing St. Ambrose says, 'That there is nothing else but the Flesh and Blood,' it appears that he is manifestly against Luther, who affirms, that the bread is with the Flesh, and the wine with the Blood.

And though this which Luther says, were as true as it is false, viz. that the bread should remain mingled with the Body of Christ; yet was it not necessary for him to blot the name of the Body of Christ out of the Sacrament, in, which he confesses that the true Body of Christ is" (*Defense of the Seven Sacraments*, pp. 212, 214).

'In the meanwhile, let us truly examine how subtly, under pretense of favoring the laity, he endeavors to stir them up to a hatred against the clergy; for when he resolved to render the Church's Faith suspicious, that its authority should be of no consequence against him; (and so by opening the gap, he might destroy the chiefest mysteries of Christianity), he began with that thing, which he foresaw would be praised and applauded by the people. For he touched the old sore, by which Bohemia had been formally blistered, viz., that the laity ought to receive the Eucharist under both kinds. When first he began to handle this point, he only said, that the Pope would do well, to have it ordained by a general council, that the laity should receive the Sacrament under both kinds; but that being by some disputed with him, and denied, he was not contented to stop there, but grew to such a perverse height, that he condemned the whole clergy of wickedness, for not doing it without staying for and council. For my part, I do not dispute the first; and though to me, no reasons appear why the Church should not ordain, that the Sacrament should be administered to the laity, under both kinds; yet doubt I not, but what was done in times past, in omitting it, and also in hindering it to be so administered now, is very convenient. Nor can I believe that the whole clergy, (during so many ages), have been so void of sense, as to incur eternal punishment for a thing but which they could reach no temporal good. It further appears not

to be a thing of such danger; because God, not only bestowed heaven upon these men, who did this thing themselves, and writ that it ought to be done; but likewise would have then honored on earth, by those by whom He is adored Himself. Amongst whom (to omit others) was that most learned and holy man Thomas Aquinas, whom I do more willingly name here; because the wickedness of Luther cannot endure the sanctity of this man, but reviles with his foul lips him whom all Christians honor. There are very many, though not canonized, who are contrary to Luther's opinion in this; and to whom, in piety and learning, Luther is no wise comparable: among whom was the Master of the Sentences, Nicholas de Lyra and many others; to each of whom it behooves all Christians to give more credit than to Luther.

But pray how Luther staggers, and contradicts himself: in one place he says, that Christ in his Last Supper not only said to all the faithful as permitting, but as commanding, 'Drink ye all of this: 'yet afterwards, (fearing to offend the laity, whom he flatters, with a view to stir up hatred against the priests,) he adds these words; not that they, who use but one kind do sin against Christ, seeing Christ did not command to use any kind, but left it to every man's discretion, saying, 'As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of me': but, says he, they sin who forbid to give both kinds to such as are willing to receive them: the blame, says he, lies upon the clergy and not on the laity. You see how clearly he first holds it for a command, and then says, it is no commandment, but a thing left to every man's discretion. What need we contradict him, who so often contradicts himself?" (pp. 214, 216, 218).

"This worse than sacrilegious caitiff [being base, cowardly, despicable] endeavors to scatter abroad the Church's most splendid congregation; to extinguish its pillar of fire; to violate the ark of the covenant; and to destroy the chief and only good sacrifice which reconciles us to God, and which is always offered for the sins of the people: for, as much as in him lies, he robs the Mass of all the benefits that flow from it to the people; denying it to be a good work, or to bring to them any kind of profit. In which thing I know not whether more to admire his wickedness, or