

**Christian
Spiritual
Conversation
on Saving
Faith**

Gerrit Roosen

**Christian Spiritual Conversation on
Saving Faith
and the
Acknowledging of the Truth
Which Is After Godliness in Hope of
Eternal Life (Titus 1:1-2),
in
Questions and Answers for the Rising
Youth,
by Which
They May Be Incited and Encouraged to
a Wholesome Practice of Life.**

Gerrit Roosen

Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. - Psalm 34:11.

For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. - 1 Tim. 4:8.

Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. - 1 Thes. 5:21.

Preface

The committee to whom was referred the translation and publication of this work, herewith present it to the public. That it is as perfect as it should be, they are not prepared to say; but that it is as perfect as they have been able to get it by much pains and labor, they are willing to acknowledge.

With respect to the motives which led to the publication of this work, and the propriety of such an undertaking, considerable might be said; but as long prefaces are seldom read, and are withal useless, unless the works to which they are prefixed themselves are read, the committee would merely state, in behalf of themselves and others who have interested themselves in the work, - that it is evidently proper, for various reasons,

that a work of the kind should be published in the prevailing language of the country; and the more so, as the wish has frequently been expressed by the English reading public to become acquainted with the doctrines of the Mennonite church. Here then there is an opportunity afforded them of doing so. May they “judge all, and hold fast that which is good.” May the good Lord also add his blessing, that this work may do something towards promoting his kingdom on earth; and then we have our highest reward for our labor.

The Committee

Berlin, (Canada West) 1856

Directions To True Godliness, Doctrine and Practice

Question 1.

Should man besides the necessary cares belonging to his bodily wants, also observe and consider more, so that he may keep his mind in a good state of rest?

Answer

Yes, certainly, as he would otherwise live like a brute in the world; wherefore he should, as a reasonable being, consider this well, and maintain his proper position amongst other creatures, (which live along with him, and also receive their nourishment from the earth;) whereby he will then find, that he does not only surpass the creatures in many things in knowledge, - but also, that he is possessed of a much higher spirit than creatures.

Question 2.

Are there also men who are not conscious of possessing a higher spirit than brutes, and yet maintain, that they can keep their minds in a good state of rest in this life?

Answer

Of such men there are more than enough in the world; who show not only by their words, but also by their actions, course of life, and countenance, that they know nothing of their salvation, much less that they are concerned about it; yea, who know neither themselves nor their condition, and who live worse than the brutes: but whenever any of these

men become of another and a better mind, and get into other reflections, (which cannot take place, however, without divine agency) and continue in them, - they will come not only to a knowledge of the nature of their condition, but also to a knowledge of themselves, and their higher spirit, - as many wise Heathen came to great knowledge, through which they endeavored to bring other men (who from inattention forgot themselves, and lived more like brutes than men,) to a better and higher knowledge, by their ingenious sayings, amongst which the best and most useful is considered to be the one: "*Know thyself.*"

Question 3.

Are there also men who do not know themselves as such?

Answer

Not only have wise Heathen found this by examination, but experience teaches daily, that there are men, who like blind heathen, have no knowledge of themselves, but live more brutish than human; from which it is evident, that they neither know themselves, their Creator, nor the spirit that is in them.

Question 4.

In what then, does man's true knowledge of himself consist?

Answer

This knowledge consists in two things.

1. To know that of and from himself, he has no power to do or understand any thing, either in matters external or spiritual.
2. To have a knowledge of his transitory and troublesome state of life.

Question 5.

Did the wise Heathen obtain the knowledge of *themselves*, wherewith they could teach others with their sayings?

Answer

The wise Heathen obtained a knowledge of themselves through the light of nature, a diligent observation of their mind, as well as that of external nature, in regard to other living creatures; as also by observing the glorious firmament and the active power visible in all creatures. By this means they came to still higher knowledge, namely: that there can be nothing of itself; but that there must be a First Cause. a Head and Being, in

which, and through which, all things are, and through whose power everything is kept in state and being.

First Article of Faith of God

Question 6.

What First Cause then, is that, in which, from which, and through which, we and all things are, and are kept in being?

Answer

This First Cause is the Great and Incomprehensible God, who has created everything in heaven above, on earth beneath, and in the water; yea, who is the Creator and Preserver of all things, and who keeps everything by the power of his word; from this God, man has received a much higher spirit than other creatures, as he has been “created in his own image” (Gen. 1:2-7). And has also been appointed by Him, lord over all things.

Question 7.

Are the sayings of the wise Heathen sufficient whereby to come to this high knowledge of God?

Answer

The sayings of the wise Heathen are not sufficient for this purpose, although we may learn something from them; but the Holy Scriptures teach us this knowledge with much clearness and many particulars.

Question 8.

In what respect then are the Holy Scriptures preferable to other writings.

Answer

The Holy Scriptures are scriptures given by inspiration of God, and are “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). They are given through highly enlightened, holy men, who were gifted by the spirit of God above other men, and who spoke these scriptures by inspiration of God, “as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Sam. 23:2; 2 Pet. 1:21).

Question 9.

Do the Holy Scriptures also teach, that we should come to a knowledge of ourselves?

Answer

Of this we have so much information in the Holy Scriptures, that it would be superfluous to quote it here; the holy men of God (among whom was the king and prophet David) saw, that many men forgot themselves, and did not discern the glory of their Creator. He says (Psalm 100): "Know ye that the Lord he is God; it is he that made us, and not we ourselves." And again (Psalm 39:5-6); "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Surely every man walketh in a vain shew; surely, they are disquieted in vain." Again (Gal. 6:3): "For if a man think himself to be something, (understand, of himself) when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself." Further (1 Cor. 4:7): "What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?"

Question 10.

Is it enough for man, to come to a knowledge of himself and of God, in order that he may thereby, in this life, have a mind and conscience at rest?

Answer

That is not sufficient: he must go further in his knowledge, in order that he may obtain still more knowledge of the Great God; through whom and from whom he himself and every thing exists, as the Holy Scriptures also testify of God, that He is He who upholds "all things by the word of his power" (Heb. 1:3).

Question 11.

Did those who had not the Holy Scriptures, not come to a true knowledge of God, through a consideration of their condition, and the observation of created things?

Answer

Neither the one nor the other was sufficient; for while they saw and knew from created things, that there is and must be a God, who created such things; but did not glorify him as God; neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools (Rom. 1:21-22; Eph. 4:18). For "that which may be known of God," God had revealed to them. (Rom. 1:19). And what they further came to, is added or explained in said chapter (v. 28).

Question 12.

Is it sufficient that we absolutely believe and hold, that there is a God, who created the heavens, the earth, and the water, together with all things that are on and in them?

Answer

It is certainly not sufficient, that we merely believe and hold, that there is a God, leaving him as such, without conforming to his Holy Word; for, "it is written, the just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:17-18). And it is also testified of such men: "They profess that they know God; but in works they deny him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate" (Tit. 1:16).

Question 13.

What more then, must be observed and done by man, besides having faith in, and knowledge of God, in order that he may have a mind at rest, and hope in God in this life?

Answer

Man must by faith entirely submit and give himself up to the Great God, and show himself in all things obedient to him; yea, also honor, praise, serve, and fear him, as is much required of us in Holy Scripture; in which God represents himself to man, as a Lord, yea as a Father, when he says: "A son honoreth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear? says the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. 1:6). So also, Moses teaches the children of Israel, to know their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt, in the following words: Now Israel! What does the Lord thy God require of thee else, than that thou lovest him with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might; honorest, fearest and servest him, and walkest in his ways; that it may be well with thee and thy children forever (Deut. 6).

Question 14.

Is the acceptable and perfect will of God sufficiently made known to us in Holy Scripture, namely, as to how we may live and walk acceptably before him?

Answer

It is incontrovertible, that the perfect and acceptable will of God is sufficiently made known to us in Holy Scripture; inasmuch as it is frequently represented as the inspired word of God throughout its contents; and amongst others by Isaiah when he says: "Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them" (Isaiah 34:16). And again, by Paul to Timothy, when he says: - "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Question 15.

Which is the chief article taught in Holy Scripture, which we are to observe and consider, and from which we may hope in God to have eternal life?

Answer

This chief article is, as has already been observed in part, faith in God and his holy word, accompanied by a pure and fervent love; so that faith and love work together; for where true faith in God exists, love is its companion. Now out of this faith hope is born, so that one springs from the other; for "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6). For when the Lord Jesus was once asked, which was the great commandment in the law, he answered: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:37-40). Therefore, Paul also says, (1 Tim. 1-5): "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (Gal. 5:6). "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." And (1 Cor. 13:13): "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity."

Question 16.

Are then these two articles, namely, hope and love, so connected with faith, that without them, we can have no hope in God and eternal life?

Answer

Yes, certainly, it is faith, from which true love has its origin, and through which our hope is strengthened, that is so necessary a thing, that without it, it is “impossible to please God;” as we have just seen from (Heb. 11:6): “But he that believeth not will be damned” (Mark 16:16).

Question 17.

What then is faith properly in itself?

Answer

Faith is, that we accept and receive that as truth which has been propounded to us from Holy Scripture, by devout men; which we should hold and believe as being as infallible, as if we had seen it ourselves, or heard it from the mouth of God. In accordance with this also is the testimony of Paul, (Heb. 11:1): “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” As we also read of Moses in the same chapter, (verse 27): “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.”

Question 18.

What then must we properly and chiefly believe of God, and how must we believe in him, and be steadfast in such faith; inasmuch as a proper faith in him, is frequently called a saving faith; which is the foundation of a happy hope in him?

Answer

Besides faith in God, as already mentioned, we must also believe the testimony of the Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ, the living Son of God: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Paul also says, (Rom. 10:9-10): “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”

Question 19.

On what must saving faith be grounded or built?

Answer

Not on man’s wisdom, or enticing, pretty words, proceeding out of his own heart; but on the infallible word of God alone, to which the scriptures

of the Old and New Testaments are serviceable, being written and produced by holy men, “moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). - Also confirmed by signs and wonders. Thereon Paul grounded his faith when he says: “I believe all things which are written in the law and in the prophets” (Acts 24:14). This he said, because the Gospel was not yet then written. To this Christ also directs, when he says: “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38).

Question 20.

Is the general description of faith called *Symbolum Apostolorum*, or *Apostolic Faith*, or *Apostolic Confession of Faith*, not the true Formulary of the Christian Faith; and has he who confesses it, not the true Confession of the Christian Faith?

Answer

The so called *Symbolum Apostolorum* contains, it is true, the chief articles of the Christian Faith, and may, in so far, be regarded as a Confession of the same; inasmuch as it agrees with the writings of the apostles; but it is not to be received as truth, that, as some pretend, the twelve apostles brought it into its present form, and that each of them composed an article of it; it is however not, on this account, in itself objectionable; but saving evangelical faith requires yet more particulars to a full instruction in it.

Question 21.

Is then the foregoing Formulary of Faith, when expressed according to the words it contains, not the right Confession of the Christian Faith, which is required of a Christian, and which is necessary to salvation?

Answer

Saving Faith does not consist in the production of an article thus composed, which is conceived by the memory, and brought forth by the mouth; or else school children would have saving faith, as they can readily express this article. No, the right and full faith to salvation must be planted and conceived in the hearts and minds of men, by reading and hearing the word of God; and when this has taken root, it will by its efficacious power, produce fruits of faith, which will be seen by others, as has already been said in the 15th question and answer to the same, and proved from (Gal.

5:6); (1 Tim. 1:5). Yes, that true faith to salvation does not merely rest in the heart; but that it must also be increased in the same, and brought forth, is also proved from (Rom. 10:10). That if we believe with the heart, we are justified, and make confession with the mouth, we are saved - was the reason that Philip said to the eunuch: "If thou believest with all thine heart," &c. (Acts 8:37). And that faith comes into the heart of man by hearing the word of God, or by reading and reflecting on the same, is not only seen from this example of the eunuch, and in the same chapter from that of the people of Samaria; but also, from the sending of the apostles to preach the gospel (Acts 8:14-17; Mark 16:15-16). For this reason, Paul also says (Rom. 10:14): "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?". And lastly, in verse 17, in the same chapter, he says: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God."

Question 22.

Has then the requisite faith also certain signs, whereby it may be known to be saving faith; as a good tree is known by the fruit which it brings forth?

Answer

Where no fruit of faith is shown or to be seen, there the full and true faith in the great and true God does not exist, whereby the promised salvation by grace, is obtained; for thus it is testified of faith (Hab. 2:4): "The just shall live by his faith." And (Heb. 10:38): "Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him." The same is to be inferred from the words of Peter, (2 Pet. 1:5-9): "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off." And James says, (2 c. 26 v.): "For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also;" which agrees with the words of Christ (Matt. 5:16): "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven."

Question 23.

Is not that a perfect faith, if we believe in the Great God of Heaven, who rules with power and glory over every thing in heaven and on earth, like a king and emperor over their dominions?

Answer

The Great God of heaven and earth is represented to us as being in heaven, as he also is; but he is so represented to us, because we are on earth. The Lord God, although he created the earth, and yet does not need it, is represented as being locally separated from us, by being in heaven, as is taught in the Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9): "Our Father which art in heaven," &c. We must not however therefore imagine, that the Lord God is confined to heaven, and separated from earth, as, for instance, a king resides in his capitol, separated from the rest of his country and subjects; but the Lord God is a God every where present, as David amply testifies in his 139th Psalm; and as the Lord himself speaks through Isaiah: "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool" (Isaiah 66:1). As the wise king Solomon also expresses himself in dedicating the temple, when he says: "The heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee" (1 Kings 8:27). Yes, although God is frequently represented as being in heaven, yet he is "not far from every one of us" (Acts 17:27).

Article First, Of the Divine Attributes

Question 24.

Is God as well present with us on earth as he is with the angels in heaven?

Answer

Certainly, the Lord God is as well present with us on earth as he is with the angels in heaven; and we people on earth are as well in his presence as the angels in heaven are in his presence. For thus says the Lord through Jeremiah (c. 23, v. 23-24): "Am I a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Do I not fill heaven and earth." And through Isaiah, (c. 57, v. 15): "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." The same is confessed by the king and prophet David (Psalm 139:7-8), when he says: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or

whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: If I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there," &c.

Article Second, Of the Divine Attributes

Question 25.

Is there anything more to be believed and confessed of God, than that he is as well present on earth as in heaven; and consequently, every where present?

Answer

There are yet more and different attributes in God, who is a God of heaven and earth, to be believed and confessed, namely, such as these: That he is a Great Lord, yea, a Lord of lords, and a King of kings, who has not only created heaven and earth, and the water, and every thing that is in and on them, but also, that every thing belongs to him; for thus it is testified of him (Psalm 24:1): "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." And further, (Psalm 95:3-5): "For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all Gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hand formed the dry land."

Article Third, Of the Divine Attributes

Question 26.

Does saving faith yet imply some particular Divine attributes, if it is to be a perfect evangelical faith?

Answer

In order that we may stand well and perfect in our faith in God, it must, according to Holy Scripture, also contain and imply a knowledge of the Divine attributes, as made known to us in Holy Scripture; so that we believe as well, that the Lord God is a God of such attributes, as that we believe that he is God; inasmuch as from such faith, as well as from a knowledge of the Divine attributes alone, obedience to, and the fear of God follow; in which attributes God is said to be excellent, as testified by Jeremiah, (c. 10, v. 6-7.) when he says: "There is none like unto thee, O Lord; thou art great, and thy name is great in might. Who would not fear thee, O king of nations?" His greatness and power David also expresses - and in these words, (Psalm 50:3-5): "Our God shall come, and shall not

keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him. He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people. Gather my saints together unto me, those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” * This knowledge also induced David to say: “My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.” (Psalm 119:120).

* In Luther’s translation of the Bible into German, this verse is translated as follows: - “Gather my saints together unto me; those that esteem my covenant more than sacrifice. This translation is preferred by some.

Question 27.

What Divine attributes are those revealed to us in Holy Scripture, which it is as necessary for us to believe of God, as to believe that there is a God?

Answer

The Divine attributes revealed to us in Holy Scripture, and which we should firmly believe, are the following: That, namely, the Lord God is ONE God, who is eternal, almighty, true, just, holy, and omniscient; in which attributes he exists as well in himself, as in exercising them over man; and shows mercy to all who fear him, and listen to him, as a gracious, merciful, longsuffering, meek God; who shows “mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments” (Exod. 20:6). But the seven first Spiritual attributes, which serve as a caution to the pious in their pilgrimage through this world, redound to the fear and terror of the wicked and ungodly; inasmuch as they abuse and despise the goodness of God; and after their “hardness and impenitent hearts treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:5-6). On the contrary however, the goodness of God is at all times over them that fear and love him; and they can comfort themselves with David, that the Lord “knoweth our frame, and remembereth that we are dust.” (Psalm 103:14).

Question 28.

Why is it so necessary to believe, that the Lord God is a God of such Divine attributes?

Answer

It is so necessary to believe this for the reason, that such belief serves to increase holy adoration, esteem, and veneration for the Divine Majesty,

amongst men; and that it is an active inducement to the attentive to fear God; for if the Divine attributes were not incorporated in the Christian Faith, men would again easily fall into heathen errors; who had all kinds of unmovable, dead images, and held them as their gods; which had indeed “hands, feet, eyes, ears, and mouths” made for them; but could therewith neither “handle, walk, see, hear, nor speak” (Psalm 115:5-7). And each held in his imagination his own god as greater than all others; as they also judged of the God of heaven, whom Paul preached (Acts 19:27-28). So, it may also be seen in the adventure of Jonah, that each man cried to his god (Jonah 1:5). But our God “is over all, blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5).

Question 29.

What evidence have we in Holy Scripture, that the Lord God is a God of such Divine attributes, and to what is it serviceable?

Answer

Of such evidence we have plenty in Holy Scripture; and amongst those who first gave evidence to this effect, was Moses, with whom the Lord spoke “face to face” (Exod. 33:11), who received the first words of God on tables of stone, and delivered them to man; who also testifies of the ONENESS of God (Deut. 6:4), as follows: “Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God is one LORD. And again, (Deut. 4:35): “Unto thee it was shewed, that thou mightest know that the Lord he is God; there is none else beside him.” And through the prophet Isaiah God testifies of himself, when he says: “I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.” “I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me” (Isaiah 45:5; 46:9). And Solomon says at the close of his prayer (1 Kings 8:60): “That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else.”

Question 30.

To what may the knowledge be serviceable, that the Lord God is ONE GOD?

Answer

Such knowledge may be serviceable to us in many respects. First, if we should peradventure, by occasion, come into strange countries among heathen people, where strange gods, or the sun, moon, or stars were worshipped, and we were urged to do the same; we might then think of

the doctrine of Christ, when he says: "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve (Matt. 4:10). As the angel said to John: "Worship God" (Rev. 19:10). For though we were at the ends of the earth, in Asia, Africa, Europe, or America, or elsewhere, - we would still have our God there to worship; as was the case with Daniel in the lion's den, and the three young men in the fiery furnace; who, although they were in a strange land amongst heathen people, still worshipped the God of heaven, and were heard; as is to be seen in (Daniel, c. 3); as also in the case of Jonah in the fish's belly (Jonah 2:2).

Question 31.

How and where is it certified and proved, that the Lord God is ONE GOD?

Answer

It is declared by and proved from the works of creation, as well as from Scripture, that the Lord God was before all visible and invisible things were created, and although these, namely, heaven and earth, and all things visible, will pass away; He will remain the same God as he was before, as the pious king David testifies of him through the spirit of God (Ps. 90:1-2): "Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." And again (Ps. 102:25-27): "Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the works of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." This was also acknowledged by Abraham, who "planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God" (Gen. 21:33).

Question 32.

To what purpose is this knowledge of the eternity of God serviceable?

Answer

This knowledge is in many respects serviceable to the comfort of the pious, and to the strengthening of their faith, particularly to the comfort of themselves and children, when they consider that they have the Lord God as well with and about them, as he was from the beginning with all the

pious ancient fathers to the enlightening of their understanding, their help and protection, when they walked in his fear, and continued in the right faith; as did the ancient fathers; of which Isaiah testifies (c. 40; v. 28-29), when he says: "Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might, he increaseth strength." Thus have the pious not only such a kind God over them during their lifetime; but also, a God to whom they may at their death confidently give in charge their children, with a similar assurance, if they only fear God. With such consolation did old Tobias address his son (Tob. 4:6). As an example, may also be taken the children of Jonadab, son of Rechab (Jer. 35). As David also assures; for after speaking of the eternity of God, he says: "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee" (Psalm 102:28). And in Psalm (115, and 125:1), he says in substance as follows: That the Lord will always abide with the pious "forever," that he is "their hope and their shield," and that those who fear him, also hope in him, not only in this life; but their souls also hope for a happy existence in the life to come; so that even as they are from the eternal God, so they must also abide eternally. The same is confirmed in substance in (Rev. 22:3-6).

Question 33.

By what do we perceive and know, that the Lord God is an Almighty God, and can so firmly believe the same?

Answer

God's almightiness (omnipotence) may especially be seen in the great and incomprehensible works of Creation, and the preservation of all visible things; which have been in a state of operation for many hundred years; and all this by the "word of his power," as the pious king David also acknowledges (Psalm 33:9): "For he spoke, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast." So, God also spoke to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1).

Question 34.

In what respect can the knowledge be serviceable to our faith, that the Lord God is an Almighty God?

Answer

This knowledge may be serviceable to man for good in many respects; when he, namely, perceives and believes, that God has power over every thing, to do and carry out what he has promised in his word; yea also in all the adversities with which the pious may meet in this life.

And first indeed it is serviceable in reminding him of his due obedience, to live piously and righteously, as said before, that God said to Abraham (Gen. 17:1): "Walk before me, and be thou perfect." And Peter says (1 Pet. 5:6): "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time."

2. It is serviceable to the pious and godly as a great and sure consolation in all their necessities and tribulations, that God is mighty to preserve, to help, and to save them; as also David speaks of the ways of the Lord (Ps. 50:15): "Call unto me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me." And God himself speaks through Isaiah, (c. 43, v. 2): "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Of all this we have sufficient examples and proof in the case of the children of Israel in the Red Sea, the prophet Jonas, the three young men in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lion's den, Joseph in Egypt, and David in the persecution of Saul; who all felt and experienced God's omnipotence in their time of need; as is to be seen in Psalm (50:15) - as already mentioned.

Question 35.

Is this knowledge of the omnipotence of God, also of use or service to those who do not live piously?

Answer

As excellent and wholesome as it is for the believing and pious, so dreadful it is to the profligate, and to those who live on so securely in disobedience and sin; so that they will be affrighted and tremble, when they shall hear of God's threatenings against and punishments of their ungodly lives, and how God has shown his power in the execution of his judgments; as is manifest in the case of Sodom, Gomorrah, Pharaoh and his host, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Jezebel, Absalom, and Jerusalem;

which Manasses also realized and expresses in his Penitential Prayer, when he says: "All men tremble before thy power; for the majesty of thy glory cannot be borne, and thine angry threatening toward sinners is importable (Prayer of Manasses 5). As the Lord God himself also speaks of the infliction of his punishments upon the ungodly, as may be seen in (Isaiah 1; Rev. 6:15-17).

Question 36.

Is it also necessary, that we believe and confess, that God is a true God?

Answer

It is necessary to believe, that God is a true God, not only for the sake of the truth, that there is a God; but also, that God himself is the Truth; and that all that his servants, the prophets and apostles, have brought forth of him, is firm, sure, and infallible truth; as Paul testifies: "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Rom. 3:4). As also Moses says (Num. 23:19): "God is not a man, that he should lie; neither the son of man, that he should repent: hath he said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good?" Through the opinion, that truth is stronger than all things, the young man Zorobabel gained the prize in preference of his comrades. He says at the close of his speech: "Blessed be the God of truth" (1 Esdras 4:40).

Question 37.

To what then is it especially serviceable, to believe, that the Lord God is a true God?

Answer

It is not only serviceable to the pious as an especial consolation; but also to sinners, when they hear the word of God propounded to them for their conversion and reformation: but still more especially is it serviceable to the pious as a consolation in all occurring accidents, that they can firmly depend on God's word and promises, as to what he has promised to give them, as well in this life, as in the life to come therefore they can place their hope and confidence firmly thereon, as David says: "For the word of the Lord is right; and all his works are done in truth" (Psalm 33:4). "For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of

God by us" (2 Cor. 1:20). "He is a buckler to all those that trust in him" (Psalm 18:30).

Question 38.

Is it also serviceable to anything else, to believe, that God is true in his word?

Answer

It is already explained above, that such faith is a great consolation to the pious. Now just as it serves the pious as a consolation, so it is on the contrary, to ungodly, willful and impenitent sinners, a certain assurance of their punishment, if they continue and persist in their sinful course of life; for it is to be known, that what God has pronounced concerning such in his word, will certainly come over them, as Paul says: "Despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:4-6). Therefore, it serves sinners as a fear and dread, as Solomon says: "The wicked flee when no man pursueth" (Prov. 28:1).

Question 39.

Whence are we to believe, that the Lord God is a Holy God?

Answer

This is not only made known to us in his word; but if we ponder in our minds over the Divine perfections and majesty, we may therefrom comprehend and judge of his Holiness; for Paul was even permitted to say of that which is human: "If the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches" (Rom. 11:16). Now if that was holy which was sacrificed according to the law of the Lord, it follows, that He also must be holy to whom such sacrifice was made, namely, God; who besides his angels is holy; and that these are holy, may be seen from (Matt. 25:31). But how much more is God holy, who created them: so that the angels may of right cry out: "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). And this the Lord God also speaks of himself through Moses: "Ye shall be holy; for I am holy" (Lev. 11:44-45; 19:2; 1 Pet. 1:16).

Question 40.

To what is the knowledge serviceable, that the Lord God is a holy God?

Answer

It is serviceable to awaken and incite all pious and true Christians to a holy life and conversation, wherewith they show themselves to be children of their heavenly father, and that they belong through faith in Jesus Christ, to the family of God, and can call him "Father" in their prayers (Matt. 6:9). This, Peter says, is their calling: "But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation" (1 Pet. 1:15). And Paul also writes: "He (Christ) hath reconciled you in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight" (Col. 1:21-22). Even as the holy Zechariah prophesied: "That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him (God) without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life" (Luke 1:74-75).

Question 41.

Whereby can we know, that we should believe, that the Lord God is a just God?

Answer

That we must also understand and conclude from his Divine majesty and perfections, besides that it is declared to us in his holy word, that he is just in his judgments on all the doings of men, whether they be good or evil.

1. In this life.

2. After this life at the day of judgment; as David testifies of both when he says: "For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright" (Psalm 11:7). "God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready" (Psalm 7:11-12). The Lord God also says himself: "I give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings" (Jer. 17:10). And as the Lord God is just on the doings of men in this life, so will he also "judge the world in righteousness" at the day of judgment (Acts 17:31). And this is also declared by Malachi (c. 4, v. 1-3.) and by Matthew (c. 25, v. 34-41.)

Question 42.

To what may the knowledge be serviceable, that the Lord God is a just God?

Answer

It is indeed serviceable to all men in many respects for good, if they would only always think about it, and consider, that God is a just God. But it is first serviceable to the pious as a precaution, to administer justice and right in all their doings, their business and conversation, trade and profession, and that no one does in any wise oppress, take the advantage of, or “defraud his brother”; for the Lord, says Paul, “is an avenger of all such” (1 Thes. 4:6). As God also speaks through Zechariah; “These are the things that ye shall do; speak ye every man the truth to his neighbor; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates” (Zechariah 8:16). “Whoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10). Secondly, it may serve as a particular consolation to the pious, when they do their duty in their calling in justice and righteousness, but are nevertheless oppressed, persecuted, ill-treated, slandered and ridiculed, on account of their piety; as was Joseph by his brethren (Gen. 37), and Susanna by the ancient wicked judges (Susanna 1:42-43). Yes, it serves them as a consolation, when they thus see, how the Lord carries out and defends the cause of the innocent; for “the integrity of the upright shall guide them,” says Solomon (Prov. 11:3). Thus, the pious may and shall be happy in God in persecution; inasmuch as they know, that God knows and judges them differently from what men do: For “the innocent shall stir up himself against the hypocrite. The righteous also shall hold on his way” (Job 17:8-9). Of this we have an example in the case of David in the persecution of Saul (1 Sam. 19:10).

Question 43.

Is the knowledge of God’s justice also in any way serviceable to sinners?

Answer

A consideration of God’s justice may serve to inspire profligate and willful sinners with fear and terror, as it does the pious with consolation, when they hear of God’s justly threatened punishments, which God remembers: “Woe unto the wicked! It shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him” (Isaiah 3:11). And on those on whom God

himself will pass the heavy sentence of woe, on them it will remain. "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). Now if such sinners see God's justice in the punishment of sin, it may awaken in them repentance and sorrow for sin, and a reformation of life; as may be seen in the case of those who became converted at Pentecost (Acts 2). For if God's word, God's omniscience, omnipotence, and justice, are discerned by sinners, - sorrow for sin is not far, and which awakens an internal sorrow and fear, as David says: "My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments" (Ps. 119-120).

Question 44.

Is God also an omniscient God, to whom every thing is known that men do?

Answer

That the Lord God is an omniscient God, must follow from his omnipotence, even if it were not made known or revealed to us in Holy Scripture; but it is made known to us in Scripture: "He that planteth the ear, shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see" (Psalm 94:9)? "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? says the Lord" (Jer. 23:24). And Paul testifies of this, when he says: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13).

Question 45.

How may this knowledge of the omniscience of God be serviceable to us, if we believe and confess the same?

Answer

This knowledge of and belief in the omniscience of God, is a chief article of the Christian Faith; inasmuch as man is thereby incited and animated to obedience towards God, the leaving off of evil, and reformation of life; for if God were an almighty and just God only, and not also an omniscient God, he would be circumstanced like a potentate who could not exercise his power and execute his judgments, because the misdeeds of his subjects could be hidden from him. But as we know that the Lord God is omniscient, we must ever confess with David: "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and

mine uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off” (Psalm 139:1-2). And this belongs to the omniscience of God, that the prayers of the pious, although they are performed in secret, by each person according to his concern, are known to and heard by him, as David again says: “There is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether” (Ps. 139:4). And this was the consolation of the pious Hezekiah when he thought he had to die, that all his doings, yea, his heart was known to the Lord. He says: “Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I walked before thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight” (Isaiah 38:3).

Question 46.

Is this knowledge of God’s omniscience also in any way serviceable to profligate sinners?

Answer

As long as such sinners live on in unbelief, and say in their hearts, with all the ungodly: “There is no God,” and “God is not in all their thoughts” (Ps. 10:4), such knowledge is of no use to them; but if they are not yet wholly sunk in infidelity, nor avow such sentiments, and then come to think of the omniscience of God, it may serve them as a beginning to cease from and leave off their wicked and sinful course of life, or else they have to fear and dread God’s threatened punishment, as Isaiah says: (c. 29, v. 15) “Woe unto them that seek deep to hide their counsel from the Lord, and their works are in the dark, and they say, Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?” And David confesses the same before the Lord, when he says: “If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee” (Psalm 139:11-12).

Question 47.

Are there also attributes in the Lord God which are particularly exercised towards those who fear him?

Answer

Yes, certainly. Just as we have already said before, and as is testified in many places in Holy Scripture; that the Lord God is a gracious, merciful, longsuffering, and meek God, towards all pious and godly persons; who honor, serve and love him; even as we may see and read here and there in

Holy Scripture: That he “shows mercy unto thousands of them that love him, and keep his commandments” (Exod. 20:6). As the Lord himself also exclaimed (Exod. 34:6-7): “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.” This also David testifies, when he says: “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. Far as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us” (Psalm 103:8-12).

Question 48.

May then the pious sin against God’s grace, since they know that they have a merciful God?

Answer

No. Since they would in this manner abuse the grace of God, and turn it into lasciviousness, as Jude says in his Epistle (v. 4); and Paul corroborates (Rom. 6:1-2): “What shall we say then? shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”

Question 49.

How then must the grace, mercy, and goodness of God be understood, so that they may be of use to the pious and godly?

Answer

For the pious and godly, the grace and mercy of God, are the main work; in which they may have comfort in their pilgrimage and spiritual warfare; for thereby they are supported, if they peradventure err or stumble in their good intention; and without which they would have to despair, when they consider the great demand which God has made on them and all mankind, namely: “Ye shall be holy; for I am holy” (Lev. 11:44). “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48).

Question 50.

On what does the consolation of the pious rest, in respect of the grace and mercy of God?

Answer

On the unspeakable and unfathomable love wherewith he has loved us, yea the whole world (John 3:16). And since God is rich in mercy, “for his great love wherewith he loved us” (Eph. 2:4). But the pious, who feel their imperfection, sigh unto their God, for he knows what kind of creatures we are, and “remembereth that we are dust” (Psalm 103:14). Especially do they comfort themselves with the words of Peter: That the Lord “is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). And this then awakens in the pious in their sorrow over their sins, a hope in God’s mercy, that they sigh and say: “I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation” (Psalm 13:5). And David says therefore in his heart: “I will love thee, O-Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust” (Psalm 18:1-2). Besides this see the Lord’s promise and assurance, made through Isaiah: “That they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength,” &c. (Isaiah 40:31).

Question 51.

Is then this faith in and knowledge of the grace, meekness, long-suffering, and mercy of God, serviceable to no others, than merely to those who endeavor to serve and fear the Lord in obedience?

Answer

It is serviceable not only to these, but also to those who, like the prodigal son, see the miserable and dangerous condition in which they stand towards God, in respect of their souls, namely, how they abused the “grace and goodness of God, and turned them into lasciviousness” (Luke 15:13; Epistle of Jude, v. 4). And thus, feel and be sensible of the burden of their sins, and sigh and speak with David: “My iniquities have gone over my head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness” (Psalm 38:4-5). Yea, and also come with a contrite heart before the Lord, and say: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my

transgression: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (Ps. 51:1-4). "Forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not in my iniquities (Prayer of Manasses). To those who thus "draw nigh unto God, God will draw nigh" (James 4:8); especially when they follow the counsel which he has given through Isaiah, when he says: "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before my eyes; cease to do evil. Learn to do well" (Isaiah 1:16-17). Then comes He to meet them whom God the Father hath sent, to call sinners to repentance, and stands with outstretched arms, and says. "Come to me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). The sinner coming to God with such lamentation, and also with a contrite heart, and a fixed purpose to reform his life, - is true godly sorrow; which "worketh a repentance to salvation not to be repented of." To such a sinner the door of mercy stands open, as is to be seen, with many particulars, in the case of the prodigal son (Luke 15), and "his sins shall be remembered no more" (Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 33:16).

Question 52.

Is then the Lord God not also merciful to impenitent sinners?

Answer

As long as men continue in their profligate, carnal and wicked course of life and conduct, they cannot console themselves with the meekness, grace, and mercy of God; for "there is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked" (Isaiah 48:22; 57:21). "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom. 1:18). And this sentence on the ungodly stands fixed: "Wo unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him" (Isaiah 3:11).

Question 53.

Are then such people called ungodly or godless, because God has nothing to do with them, and they nothing with God; and are therefore godless, that is, without God?

Answer

They are not called godless, because they are without God, or because God has nothing to do with them; but because they are not willing to bear the Lord's easy yoke and light burden (Matt. 11:30), and follow their own

will, contrary to the will of God, and pursue their affairs with all kinds of crafty artifices, and without any fear of God, as David says (Psalm 10:3-4): “The wicked boasteth of his heart’s desire, &c. The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.” “The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt” (Isaiah 57:20). Therefore, David speaks further rightly of them, when he says: “The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes” (Psalm 36:1). For they turn themselves from God’s commandments, as if there were no God.

Question 54.

Is there then for such people no more hope of salvation; must they remain banished from the Lord’s countenance?

Answer

There is no hope for the salvation of such people, as long as they continue in their ungodliness and wickedness, and reject the counsel of God against themselves; for although they know “the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them;” and are “abominable, and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate” (Rom. 1:32; Tit. 1:16). Therefore, Scripture says unto them: “After thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest thou up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:5-6). “In the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be” (Eccl. 11:3).

Question 55.

When we have then come by faith to a knowledge of all these Divine Attributes, should we not then also have a knowledge of the nature of God’s Divine Majesty?

Answer

In order that we may honor, love, fear, and serve the Lord God the better, he has, besides the revelation of his acceptable will, (as already mentioned and shown) also revealed to us his Divine Attributes, in order that we may thereby know in what relation he stands to us; but not how he exists in his own Divine Being; for, as this could not be serviceable to the

promotion of our salvation, it has not pleased him to reveal anything to us about it; that we may not by presumptuous searching and seeking to know his precise nature, commit sin; and as mere creatures, how can we comprehend our Creator? For if the works of man cannot comprehend the nature of their maker, how shall we be able to understand and comprehend the nature of the Great Creator? “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than our ways, and his thoughts than our thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). When Moses desired to see the glory of God, he received the answer: “Thou must not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live (Exod. 33:20), understand, in his Divine nature, for although God’s countenance is mentioned in Holy Scripture, we must not understand this in a natural sense, after the manner of man; but rather in a spiritual sense, as an effect of him towards us; and which is thus expressed to assist, in some measure, our weakness, and to represent and show his operations, but not his precise nature, as no image can be formed of that, as is to be seen in (Isaiah 40:18-25): “To whom then will ye liken God? or what likeness will ye compare unto him? To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One.” Thus, the Lord God is and remains, in the nature of his being, to us an incomprehensible God; and although we can see his operations in many things, yet “his understanding is infinite” (Psalm 147:5). And we are obliged to say with Paul “O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” (Rom. 11, 33)! Now if God’s judgments and ways are incomprehensible, how much more so is his Divine Being itself!

Article Fourth, Of the Unity of God

Question 56.

Now there has been much said of God; yea also how that he was ONE GOD. Why then is it said by so many, and also at so many places: “God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost.” Is then according to such expression, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, even as the Father is God? Why then are the Jews in the wrong when they say that Christians worship and profess three Gods; whereas it is otherwise acknowledged that there is but *One God*?

Answer

We have said and confessed, that not only the Lord God is incomprehensible; but also, that his judgments in regard to us are so; therefore, the Divine Being of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, or the Spirit of God, as they exist in themselves, cannot be comprehended by man, nor expressed in words. For although it is said by some men, that there are three independent persons or beings in the Godhead, and therefore say further: "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; yet we do not find such expressions in Holy Scripture; but on the contrary, that the Son and Holy Ghost are united in the same Divine Being, and that the Godhead is likewise attributed to them; as Christ's own words purport (John 14:9): "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father;" and (John 10:30): "I and the Father are one."

Question 57.

But when the Lord God calls himself to Moses, the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob" (Exod. 3:15), are not thereby three names mentioned?

Answer

The Lord God does indeed confess himself to have been the God of these three persons; but not that he, on his part, consists of three persons; but that he is the God of Israel; and besides that, he is the same God that was the God of their fathers; namely, the "God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob;" who sent Moses to them, (Israel) and was further now also their God. But this God is not merely a God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob; but a "God of the whole earth" (Isaiah 54:5). Not a "God of the Jews only; but also, the God of the Gentiles" (Rom. 3:29).

Question 58.

How then must these three names be understood, of which we read in Matthew (28:19): "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Answer

From this it must not be understood, that there are three Beings, or three persons, much less that there are three Gods in heaven. But these names are thus differently expressed in consideration of the work of redemption, and the salvation of the human race; as, the Father the origin, the Son the means of redemption, and the Holy Ghost sanctification and

confirmation in salvation; all of which thus happens to us from the perfection of the Great God, Creator of heaven and earth; as Paul says: "Now he which establisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:21-22). Now although there are different persons with man; such as father, mother, and son; yet must we not thus talk and judge of God, after the manner of man; for we have proved that he is an incomprehensible God. Hence, we should rather understand under these names, "ONE GOD;" as John testifies of the same (1 John 5:7): "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one." Of this ONENESS we have also testimony in John (1:1): "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." As we also read of God and the Spirit, in the account of creation: That the "Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:1-2). To which David also refers when he says: "By the Word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth" (Psalm 33:6).

Question 59.

How can it be, that these three, namely, "God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost," are "ONE GOD;" since it is so clearly written by Matthew (c. 3, v. 16-17), that Jesus was baptized by John, that the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him, and that a voice from heaven said: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" where indeed the Son was baptized, the Holy Ghost seen, and the Father's voice heard. Is it not then to be inferred, that there are three Divinities in heaven?

Answer

Were we to view and consider this matter after the manner of man, we would conclude and judge, that there are; but this great work of God, which God has, according to his promise, accomplished supernaturally, through his great love and Divine power, cannot and must not be judged and understood in a natural manner; but rather be viewed, believed, and considered, as an incomprehensible work, with high admiration of God and his great, almighty, and inconceivable wisdom. But the person of Jesus Christ was at that time to be seen and felt in his humanity in the flesh; yet

as Paul says: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19). We must also further confess with Paul: "Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh." (1 Tim. 3:16). Thus, this matter remains to human reason, incomprehensible; even as a father who has a son, is not the son, but the father; so also, is the son not the father, but the son of the father; and as the Holy Spirit is a spirit of God and of Christ, so he is neither the Father nor the Son, but the Holy Spirit. But as we are mere natural beings, and this is supernatural and a work of God, we must view it as a godly mystery, and receive it in faith. Nor should we desire to search into any part of the Divine nature which is incomprehensible to us; as remarked before from Romans (11:33): "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out."

Question 60.

Have then the Jews no testimony and proof of the "Unity of God" in the Old Testament; since it seems so strange to them, that Christians profess, in the Divine Being, "Father, Son, and Holy Ghost;" through which they (the Jews) alienate themselves still more from Christianity?

Answer

It appears that as long as they adhere so closely to Moses, and the veil remains hanging over their hearts and eyes, they cannot perceive nor understand this matter. Besides this, it does not become them to keep so distant; much less, to speak so blasphemously of the matter in question; inasmuch as there is so frequently mention made of the "Holy Spirit," the "Spirit of the Lord," and the "Spirit of God," in the Old Testament; as is to be seen in the beginning of the description of creation: "And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" (Gen. 1:2). And David says: "The Spirit of the Lord spoke by me, and his word was in my tongue" (2 Sam. 23-2). And again, he says (Psalm 51:12): "Uphold me with thy free spirit." And Isaiah says in lamenting over Israel: "They rebelled and vexed his holy Spirit. Where is he that put his holy Spirit within him" (Isaiah 63:10-11)? And again, it is said, (Isaiah 44:3; Joel 3:1) "I will pour out my spirit upon thy seed," &c.

Question 61.

Do we then read nothing of the Son of God in the Old Testament; since it appears so strange to the Jews, that we Christians honor Christ as the Son of God; whom they will not accept as the Messiah?

Answer

As they expect a temporal Messiah, such as Moses and Elias, and an earthly kingdom like that of David and Solomon, they remain in unbelief towards the Son of God, Jesus Christ; otherwise, they can find testimony enough of him in the Old Testament; as there are the Proverbs of the wise man Solomon: "Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? Who hath gathered the wind into his fists? Who hath bound the waters in a garment? Who hath established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell" (Prov. 30-4)? Of this Son (in the person of God) David also testifies: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession" (Psalm 2:7-8). "Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him" (Psalm 2:12). Of the Son's unity with God, Isaiah prophecies: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

Article Fifth, Of the Incarnation of Christ

Question 62.

Concerning the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, was he before his birth by Mary, already the Son of God with the Father!

Answer

Certainly, he was before his birth by Mary, with the Father, as we have just proved from Isaiah (9:6). "Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20). Not only fore-ordained, but existing from eternity; as Micah testifies, (c. 5, v. 2): "Whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting." Therefore, Christ says himself (John 17:5): "O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." But Paul writes of the Son yet more explicitly,

when he says: "Who is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of every creature: for by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Col. 1:15-16). From this his eternity is sufficiently explained.

Question 63.

Now since this is so certain and true of the Son of God, that the Father testifies of him: "This is my beloved Son," why then does Christ so frequently call himself the "Son of man?"

Answer

This is a matter of great mystery, which surpasses all human reason; as it cannot be well comprehended, how it could be, and has also come to pass, that the Great God permitted his son, whom he had conceived from eternity, to be born man by a virgin, and yet remain his son; which Paul calls the "mystery of godliness" (1 Tim. 3:16).

Question 64.

Has then the Son of God, by his advent into this world, become *that* which he was not before?

Answer

It has pleased God to reconcile the human race to himself by his Son; and thus, to destroy and annihilate "sin in the flesh through sin." "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21). And thus, he became that which he was not before; for the "Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness" (Rom. 1:3-4). That "which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life" (1 John 1:1). "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of man" (Phil. 2:6-7). "Was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15). Now for these reasons the Son of God also calls himself the "Son of man."

Article Fifth, Of the Fall of the Human Race

Question 65.

Why then has the Son of God come into the world?

Answer

Because the first man Adam, who was created by God in his own image, good and perfect (Gen. 1:27), transgressed his command, and thus turned away from him, - he fell under God's wrath and condemnation; and not he alone, but all who have descended from him (Gen. 3:1-7). And thus, by one man (Adam) "sin entered into the world, and death by sin, (understand, eternal death), and so death passed upon all men: and reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression" (Rom. 5:12-14). From which no one "can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him" (Psalm 49:7). "For the judgment was by one to condemnation" (Rom. 5:16). So that all the posterity of Adam may well say with the pious Esdras: "O thou Adam, what hast thou done! for though it was thou that sinned, thou art not fallen alone but we all that come of thee" (2 Esdras 7:48).

Question 66.

Has then the Son of God, Jesus Christ, come into the world to appease, take away, reconcile, and satisfy the wrath of God?

Answer

It was thus the acceptable will of God, according to his unfathomable love and mercy, that he sent his beloved and only begotten Son into the world in the flesh, again to raise and reconcile to himself, the fallen race of man; therefore, he is also called in the prophecy of Isaiah, "The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). For although the "statutes" of Moses had the promise, that these who kept them, should "live in them" (Lev. 18:5); yet this was included under a curse: "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them" (Deut. 27:26). Now inasmuch as through the weakness of the flesh, no one could keep the law perfectly, all men were "under the curse and wrath of God" (Gal. 3:10). "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. 8:3). "For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by

the obedience of one many shall be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). "That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 5:21). "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (Cor. 15:22). "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh" (Eph. 2:17; Luke 2:10; Acts 10:36). "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Question 67.

Is then the work of our salvation and redemption attributed to the Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, alone; because his name is most frequently mentioned, and he is called our Savior?

Answer

It was thus the eternal decree of God, that he would, through his Son, accomplish the work of redemption, by presenting him as a means for the salvation of man; as is to be seen from the fact, that the angel carried the message to Mary and Joseph, that they should "call his name JESUS" (Matt. 1:21; Luke 1:31); because he should "save his people from their sins." Notwithstanding, this salvation did not take place without the Father, but with him; as is to be seen from (2 Cor. 5:19); where Paul says: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. "But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). "Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us" (Luke 1:78). "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4-5; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9-10). And although the work itself is accomplished through the Son, and he is therefore called the "finisher of our faith" (Heb. 12:2), yet the Father must not be excluded therefrom; but we must also give him honor, praise, and thanks therefore; as the angels at the birth of Christ instructed us by their example to do, when they said: "Glory to God in the highest," &c. (Luke 2:14). And Paul also says: "Thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: who hath

delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:12-14).

Question 68.

Does then saving faith, whereby we believe that there is “ONE GOD,” also require of us, that we believe, that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, our Savior and Redeemer?

Answer

This must infallibly follow from saving faith in God, who is the Creator of heaven and earth; as we have before proved his (the Son’s) unity with the Father; and he himself says: “Ye believe in God, believe also in me” (John 14:1). “He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36). “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Indeed, this is the foundation of the gospel, the beginning and end of the same. Again, it is said: “But these (signs) are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31). As Peter also directs his hearers in his sermon (Acts 2:36), and Cornelius and his house (Acts 10:36); and Philip the people of Samaria and the eunuch (Acts 8:12-37). As also Paul and Silas said to the jailor: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house” (Acts 16:31).

Question 69.

Is then faith in God, and his Son Jesus Christ, sufficient for salvation?

Answer

This is indeed the chief article of true faith to salvation, when such faith is well and rightly fixed in the heart according to scripture, and influences the whole man: “For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). But as the question is here more particularly asked, whether such faith alone is sufficient to salvation, - we must again say, that a mere oral confession that we have such faith, is not sufficient to salvation; but much more a faith whereby we willingly take upon ourselves the cross of Christ, and thereby show by the fruits of our faith, that we have a “faith that worketh by love.”

And that we also give all diligence to have our faith accompanied by the Christian virtues of “knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). For if we have not these virtues with our faith, but merely make an oral confession of God and Christ, such confession can help us nothing to our salvation. “For he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off” (2 Pet. 1:9). Of which James also speaks: “But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:20-26). For faith is not without works, that is, such works as please God; as was shown by Abraham in reality. Therefore, James may well say with Peter, that a “man is justified by works, and not by faith only.”

Article Seventh, Of Good Works

Question 70.

Now since good works along with faith, are so necessary; as faith without them is good for nothing; does man merit anything with God to salvation, with his good works?

Answer

Just as faith must be firm and constant, if God is to be pleased therewith (Heb. 11:6); so, must the Christian virtues and good works be firm and constant in love, if we hope to be saved; as we have before shown from (2 Pet. 1:9). And in Matthew (25:42-43) it is plainly to be seen, that works must accompany faith to salvation. And in (v. 34) Christ says: “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” &c., and then names each one’s reward according to his works (v. 35-41). And in John (c. 5, v. 29), he says: “They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life,” &c. As is also to be seen, (Phil. 2:12; 1 Cor. 15:58). As however the question is asked, whether man can do any thing towards God to merit his salvation, it is to be observed, that he cannot; as we would thereby make God our debtor. For although salvation is promised on good works, at different places in Holy Scripture, this has reference to such works as are produced by faith, love, and obedience; but it is not to be understood, that heaven may be earned thereby. For it is said: “When ye shall have done all these things

which are commanded you, say, we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.” (Luke 17:10).

Question 71.

Must we then, while we desire and strive for eternal salvation, practice no Christian virtues, and do no Christian works; since Paul nevertheless promises eternal life to those, (Rom. 2:7): “who by patient continuance in well doing, seek after it?”

Answer

In the practice and proof of our faith, our mind and striving must always be directed towards eternal life; as the needle of the compass points to the north; as Christ says: “Strive to enter in at the strait gate” (Luke 13:24). And this from the beginning unto the end of faith and life; which Paul also clearly indicates, when he says: “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24; 15:58). “I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:14). Again, Paul says: “To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life” (Rom. 2:7). Thus, the first and the last, the doctrine and ministry of the gospel, is: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). And according to the words of Christ: “He that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt. 10:22). So, Paul also testifies, that this in his whole career was his aim, when he says: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Thus, the course of the Christian must be in striving for eternal life. (2 Pet. 1:11). “For we are his (God’s) workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). To this purpose are also the words of Christ, when he says: “My sheep hear my voice, and I give them eternal life” (John 10:27-28).

Article Eighth, Of the New Covenant, Or New Testament

Question 72.

Must then all believers, who hope to be saved, be obedient to the voice of Christ, as their lawgiver, and follow his doctrine and example?

Answer

This we must do from the whole heart, and not merely with the mouth; as is clearly to be seen from many testimonies in Holy Scripture, as well in the Old Testament as in the New; as also from the promises and their fulfilment. As the prophet Moses says: "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15; Acts 3:22). "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people: a leader and commander to the people" (Isaiah 55:4). For "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1:1-2). And not only by him, but also of him, from heaven: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him" (Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 2 Pet. 1:17).

Question 73.

Does then the Old Testament not serve us any more for doctrine; since our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, has come into the world, and we are commanded to hear and follow him?

Answer

The external ordinances of the Jewish law given by Moses, in which there were all kinds of ceremonies, which the Jews were commanded to observe in their Divine Service, are not to be observed any more by Christians; as they were shadows and types of the sacrifice of Christ and his royal priesthood, in which the promise of God of the coming of Christ, the salvation of the human race, and what the prophets prophesied of the same, are declared; given us as an assurance and strengthening of our faith in the Son of God; who by his coming and sacrifice has become "the end of the law" (Rom. 10:4). For through his suffering, death, and sacrifice, all the ceremonies of the law came to an end; as he said at the close of his suffering, "It is finished" (John 19:28-30). Namely, all that was promised to the fathers, typified in the ceremonies of the law, and predicted by the prophets, according to the words of Christ (Luke 18:31; 24:26-46; 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

Question 74.

Does then the Ceremonial Law, or the customs commanded and taught in the Old Testament, still concern us; so that we should conform as much

to them as to the doctrine of Christ and his apostles?

Answer

Yes. For all that the holy men of God have taught, has been brought forth by the Holy Spirit, and written for us as doctrine (2 Pet. 1:21), as well as that which the apostles have written; for Christ says: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets; I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill" (Matt. 5:17). And all that the two tables or ten commandments, and the doctrine of the prophets, contain, - remains as the chief work of the New Testament, namely, the law of the love of God, and of our neighbor; for "on these two commandments (says Christ) hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40). Upon which the apostle Paul has founded his doctrine for all Christians, when he says: "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" (2 Tim. 1:5).

Article Ninth, Of the Christian Church or Communion

Question 75.

Now since the Ceremonial Divine Service distinguished Heathenism from Judaism; which latter in its time, comprised the people of God, the temple of Jerusalem being their house of worship, and consequently their center of communion; in what then does the Church of God now consist; so that they who belong thereto, may be considered as, and called, the people and children of God?

Answer

Of this the Lord himself hath spoken through Jeremiah, as also through Ezekiel "I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them forevermore" (Ezek. 37:27). "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After these days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). But now this new covenant is the gospel of God the Father, which has been proclaimed through his only beloved Son, as also through his disciples; for "God, who at sundry times and divers manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken

unto us by his Son" (Heb. 1). "For so God loved the world, (understand, the whole human race), that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). So that it may now be said: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel" (Mark 1:15). As was prophesied before through Isaiah, (c. 49, v. 6): "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth." Thus, the Son of God became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him (Heb. 5:9). Through such faith then believers became God's people and children of God in the Communion and Church of Christ (Gal. 3:26; Rom. 8:16). And this Son of God is set by the Father as the head over the church, according to the words of Paul (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18-19; Isaiah 55:4).

Question 76.

Will then the Lord Jesus, as the head of the evangelical church or communion, govern, protect, superintend, and lead the same alone; as the head does the other members of the body; or as the man is the head over his wife and children?

Answer

Since the Son of God has been chosen, ordained, and confirmed thereto by the Father (Matt. 28:18), he has not only shown himself as the head and ruler of his members; but also went before them as a leader, with the pattern of his life; gave them commandments and interdictions, besides the guidance of his Spirit in holy truth, for their preservation to eternal life; as he says himself (John 10:27): "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give them eternal life" (John 10:27-28). And (Matt. 11:29-30): "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lonely in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." Further (Matt. 28:20): "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

Article Tenth, Of the Deacons and Ministers of the Christian Church or Communion

Question 77.

Has then the Son of God, the Lord Jesus, also appointed persons in his Church, and over his Communion, as Superintendents, Deacons and Teachers?

Answer

Yes. He has appointed several overseers to serve his church and communion in his bodily absence; to teach his members the doctrine, commandments, and ordinances left by him; as also to preach the gospel, to which he himself appointed several in the days of his incarnation, whom he called apostles (Matt. 10:1-3; Luke 6:13-15), and sent them forth to proclaim the gospel, as he did also at his ascension, with a declaration of his power to do the same, when he says: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations," &c (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15). Thus has God the Father, together with his Son, for the edification and improvement of the church - according to the testimony of St. Paul - appointed "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the edifying of the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-12). Which body is the Church of Christ.

Question 78.

Is this still thus performed by the Father, and Christ the Son, without the means or co-operation of man?

Answer

Just as the Lord God, together with his spirit and word, has always effected the salvation of man through the external co-operation of man, and in the first Book of Kings (c. 19:16), Elias is commanded to anoint Elisha in his stead as a prophet; so it still pleases God to do the same under the Gospel Dispensation; as is to be seen from Christ's own words, when he says: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:37-38; Luke 10:2). Thus, the chief work of obtaining men for God's harvest or field of labor, is ordained by the Lord, and received from him through prayer; but besides this, the members of the church are to look for such men as fear God, are lovers of the church and of divine truth; and are thus good examples in doctrine; as Luke testifies of Christ (Acts 1:1), where he alludes to his having written all that Christ did and

taught. Thus, we see that the first church and apostles did as above remarked, when they wanted to ordain an apostle in Judas' place; that is, they looked to fitness, prayed God, and said: "Thou Lord, which knowest the hearts of men, show whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part in this ministry," &c. (Acts 1:24). And this Peter observed faithfully, being commanded before all others to feed the flock of Christ. And Paul, the "chosen vessel" of the Lord, observed the same thing, when he writes to Timothy: "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). "Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9). And together with a blameless life, such men must also have a good report, not only of those within the church, but also "of them which are without;" so that their office be not blasphemed (1 Tim. 3:7; 4:12). Such men must then continue in their ministry, and minister according to "the ability which God giveth" (Pet. 4:11). And not "neglect the gift that is in them, which was given them by prophecy with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery" (1 Tim. 4:13-16). Who do not feed the flock of Christ with the design of temporal gain, neither for the fleece nor the milk - "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3).

Question 79.

Must then the teachers not be maintained by the church; that is, receive pay for their service; or must they labor to maintain themselves; do as the apostle Paul did; who labored day and night, "that he might not be chargeable to any" (Acts 18:3; 20:34; 1 Cor. 4:12; 2 Thes. 3:8)?

Answer

In the choosing of evangelical teachers, and those who devote themselves to the office of such, all temporal designs must cease; on the contrary, the welfare and good government of the church, and the honor of God, must be kept in view. And he who is thus chosen, must, on his part, accept and act in the ministry out of love to the utmost welfare of the church; thus, devoting himself to the service of God and the church, according to the example of Paul (Gal. 1:16). If he has however opportunity to maintain himself and those entrusted to his care, he is to follow the

example of Paul, as he (Paul) testifies of himself: "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). As otherwise, if one resorts to the ministry for the enjoyment of temporal gain, it has more the appearance, that he is seeking improper gain, than that of the fruit of love and affection; which is otherwise required (1 Pet. 5:2-3). For the striving for temporal gain, renders a minister unworthy before God, and soon unfit for his ministry amongst men.

Question 80.

Must then such ministers receive nothing at all from the church for their service for the maintenance of themselves and those entrusted to them; but must maintain themselves?

Answer

If with such the design of temporal gain is not the motive of their ministry; but that they devote themselves thereto out of love, and serve with the gift and "ability which God giveth;" in such case the church is bound in love, on her part, to provide for their necessities; for if a minister serves the church out of love and cordial affection, the church is, according to the words of Christ and the doctrine of Paul, under obligation, and not out of mutual love, in duty bound, to provide for him according to his necessities: for thus teaches the latter (1 Thes. 5:12-13), in these words: "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves. "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things (Gal. 6:6). And of himself he says: "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things" (1 Cor. 9:11).

Question 81.

Thus, then a minister may receive pay for his service, if he stands in need of it; since Christ says: "The laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7).

Answer

If pay is demanded by the minister for his service, there is no more room for love; but it is to be feared, that by such a one the flock is fed for the sake of the fleece and milk, as the Lord God complains of such (Ezek. 34:2-3), "Woe be to shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should

not the shepherd feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock.” Which militates against the words of Christ (Matt. 10:8): “Freely ye have received, freely give.” But if a minister, in his superintendence of the church, performs his duty faithfully before the Lord, then the church also has its duty to perform towards the minister, and indeed each member for himself. But when Christ says: “The laborer is worthy of his hire, this has reference to the duty and obligation of the church and those who receive his service; and that they shall do this to their minister as a reward for what he has done for them. As Paul also compares it (1 Cor. 9:7-14; 1 Tim. 5:18): “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn.” And to this also Paul has reference, when he speaks of the duty of members: “That they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Question 82.

But how can it be reconciled, or how does it agree, when Christ says: “The laborer is worthy of his hire, and Paul says: “The Lord hath ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel;” and yet Christ says: “Freely ye have received, freely give. Do not these things militate against one another?

Answer

They do not militate against one another, and can well be reconciled, if it only be considered under what sense and intention each of them was spoken, and that on all sides, love should be exercised and have the precedence. For one treats of the teacher and his duty; the other of the hearers and their duty. Now when these matters are on all sides judged of rightly, they can easily be reconciled. But if the teacher will continually insist upon the duty or obligation of his hearers, and wants to have observed towards him what is recorded in (Matt. 10:10; 1 Cor. 9:14); but on the other hand forgets his duty, which he is to perform out of love, and not for the sake of gain; and again when the hearers insist upon the teacher performing his duty towards them, but forget their own: -In such case the work of love will be at a stand, become fruitless, and be eventually extinguished. But where people act and continue honestly in love, they do not seek their own advantage, but that of others: they seek what is for the promotion of their neighbor (1 Cor. 10:24; 13:5). And when

the words (Matt. 10:8; Ezek. 34:3; 1 Pet. 5:2-3); - are properly understood and considered, it will be clearly seen, that they concern the teacher, and not the hearers. But concerning the words (1 Thes. 5:12-13; Gal. 6:6; 1 Cor. 9:11); - which concern the hearers, it is to be remarked, that when they are observed without reluctance, it goes well in the church, and love may abide; and whatever else may appear at variance, may be reconciled.

Question 83.

What kind of a service in the church is that, whose members are called assistants and governors?

Answer

This is a service, whose members dispatch all cases concerning the welfare of the church that do not concern the ministerial service; and who have a particular oversight over the poor, over widows and orphans, and over aged, frail, and infirm persons; so that no one suffers want: who consequently receive the given alms into safe-keeping, and distribute them among the needy as we read that Peter says: "It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we appoint over this business" (Acts 6:2-3). From which service honorable aged women are also not to be excluded (1 Tim. 5:9-10; Tit. 2:3), but are to perform such service in their sphere, and particularly amongst their own sex.

Article Eleventh, Of the Entrance into the Church or Communion

Question 84.

Can we become members of the Communion or Christian Church thereby, that we believe the gospel; as also, that there is a God, who sent Jesus Christ; or must yet more be done, if we will become members of the Church or Communion?

Answer

Faith in the gospel - which testifies of God and his Son Jesus Christ - is the beginning or first stage of entrance into the Church of Christ. But in order to become a member of the same, a sound conversion and an entire change of life must take place. For it is said: "Repent ye, and believe the

gospel" (Mark 1:15). As was manifested in many, who - (when Peter and other apostles preached the gospel to them at the day of Pentecost, whereby their hearts were touched, that they said: "Men and brethren, what shall we do?") - received the answer: "Repent, &c. (Acts 2:37-38). As also the words of Christ show (Luke 24:46-47), when he says: "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name." Which is also testified by Paul (Acts 17:30), when he says: "The times of ignorance God winked at; but now he commandeth all men every where to repent."

Question 85.

What kind of a work is repentance? and what use is there in it that one does repent?

Answer

True, evangelical repentance - a repentance that is valid before God - is no small or insignificant matter, but a great one; inasmuch as the pardon of sins is promised thereon. It consists in two points:

1. In a true knowledge of God and his Divine attributes.
2. In a knowledge of our own dangerous condition. For without a true knowledge of God and his holy will, and a knowledge of our inability to fulfill the same, there is no pardon of sin to be expected. On the contrary, if any one will obtain the favor of God, he must see his sinful condition; how he has, like the prodigal son, abused his heavenly Father's "goods" and mercy, and turned them "into lasciviousness" (Jude 4). Through which twofold knowledge he will, with David, "have respect unto the Lord's ways" (Psalm 119:15). Besides, he will "behold the goodness and severity of God" (Rom. 11:22). And how the "goodness of God leadeth him to repentance" (Rom. 2:4). Thus repenting, and saying with a deep sigh in his heart: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Rom. 7:24). So that he does under the burden of his sins, with David, "go mourning all the day long" (Psalm 38:6). In such a condition, man has come to a knowledge of himself, and is far advanced in repentance and sorrow for his sins.

Question 86.

Is it then no true and full repentance, when we repent of and mourn over our sins?

Answer

To have a knowledge of our sins, and to repent of them before men - to say that we are sorry for them - is not yet true, yea scarcely a half repentance. True repentance - a repentance that will be valid before God - must be shown and attested by a contrite heart and heart-felt sorrow before God; so that we speak sighingly before him: "I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only have I sinned: and done this evil in thy sight" (Psalm 51:3-4). Saying also with the prodigal son: "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants" (Luke 15:18-19). And with Manasses: "I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; and acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities."

Question 87.

Is it also no full and true repentance, if we repent of our sins, mourn over them, and pray God for pardon?

Answer

Although this is the chief part of repentance, still it is no full repentance, unless it is connected with a holy resolution to forsake sin and amend our lives. For this is the purport of the ground and foundation of the entrance into the Christian church, laid by Christ: "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17). Of which amendment of life, Solomon also speaks very properly when he says: "Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins shall have mercy" (Prov. 28:13). And not only confesses and forsakes them, but also puts them wholly away from him; as God speaks through Isaiah (Isaiah 1:16-17): "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment." And James says: "Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness" (James 4:8-9). On such the Lord will look in mercy, as he speaks through Isaiah "I will: look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah

66). "Wherefore come out from among them, (understand, out from among the ungodly,) and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17-18). Thus, going on from stage to stage, is a repentance that is valid before God; as we have thereby the promise, that though our "sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

Question 88.

When then a person has come to the faith, and also to true repentance and amendment of life, through the ministry and the reading of the word of God: what more remains for him to do; so that he may become a member of the church, and have a mind at rest for himself?

Answer

When a person is in possession of true and saving faith, so that he believes that there is a God, and also "that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," - with such a person faith does not stand still; but goes on from stage to stage; from virtue to virtue; and from commandment to commandment; such person showing a filial obedience in every thing that may be serviceable to his soul's salvation; so that the words (Rom. 6:17), fully apply to him. "God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." This proof of obedience is then a willingness, to take upon ourselves the yoke of Christ; as he calls all penitent hearts unto him: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28-29). And this is the free, open "fountain for sin and for uncleanness" (Zech. 13:1), to which the apostles directed all afflicted and anxious souls of men; as did Philip, the eunuch (Acts 8:35), Peter, Cornelius and his house (Acts 10:36), and Paul the jailor (Acts 16:31).

Article Twelfth, Of External Water Baptism on Faith

Question 89.

What then is required of man in the gospel, to show his obedience, when he takes upon himself the yoke of Christ?

Answer

The first proof of his obedience is, that he submits to the commandment of Christ, and becomes baptized on his confession of faith; as is to be seen (Matt. 28:19-20); "Teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" as was done with many at the day of Pentecost at Jerusalem, after hearing the sermon of Peter; so that all who gladly received the words of the apostles were baptized (Acts 2:41). So, the people of Samaria, when they believed the preaching of Philip, who preached to them "concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, were baptized both men and women" (Acts 8:12). Further, the eunuch (Acts 8:38); Cornelius and his house (Acts 10:48); the jailor (Acts 16:33); Yea, Paul himself, after he was taught and instructed by Ananias (Acts 9:18). So that baptism is a work that properly belongs to faith and true repentance.

Question 90.

In what respect then is Christian Baptism serviceable to believing and penitent persons? Are they also benefited thereby?

Answer

Christian external water-baptism implies that it is a commandment of God, given by the Son of God, and that it is conducive to the benefit of man in various respects, if it is received with a sincere heart, and the obligation which it imposes properly observed.

1. It signifies the burying of the old man of sin, according to the words of Paul (Rom. 6:3-4), when he says: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

2. It signifies the pardon, washing off, and absolution of sin, for thus said Peter to the contrite hearts at the day of Pentecost: "Be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). And Ananias to Paul: "Brother Saul, why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away

thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:13-16). Through which is represented the purification which takes place through the blood of Christ; as is to be seen from the words of Christ (Matt. 26:28; Col. 1:14; 1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5).

3. The fulfilling of “all righteousness,” according to the declaration of Christ (Matt. 3:15).

4. “The answer of a good conscience toward God” (1 Pet. 3:21).

Question 91.

Is it also stated in the gospel, to whom baptism is to be administered? or are some excluded therefrom?

Answer

This question may be answered in a twofold manner; namely, that baptism must be viewed in a general and also in a particular manner. The law of Moses was given for the children of Israel alone, and not for the gentiles; as David testifies when he says: “He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation” (Psalm 147:19-20). But the law of the gospel is given for all men, without distinction of Jew or heathen (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). Circumcision was also only commanded to be performed on the male sex, and not on the female (Gen. 17:10). On the contrary, baptism requires no distinction, not even between men and women; as is to be seen in the case of the people of Samaria (Acts 8:12; 16:15). As also in the case of those who were baptized at the day of Pentecost; and that of the heathen centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:47-48).

Question 92.

Is then baptism of so general a nature that it should be administered to all men; even as it is said of the gospel, that it should be preached to every creature (Mark 16:15)?

Answer

In the administration of baptism, as in the functions of the ministry, no distinction is made; but all those who are of a capable understanding to give ear to the words of the ministry - who can be taught - and who can also receive the doctrine of the gospel in faith, and thereby become fit subjects for baptism - after embracing the same by repentance and amendment of life - all such may be and have been baptized; as is shown

above from (Acts 8:12; 10:47-48; 16:15). For all the persons here alluded to - after the gospel was preached to them, and they were exhorted to faith by repentance and amendment of life, and received the gospel - were baptized. And although children belong to the human race, yet we cannot see - either from the command of Christ, from his doctrine, nor from the practice of the apostles - that baptism becomes them, or that they were baptized. And why not? Because they have no ears to hear, nor hearts to understand (Matt. 11:15).

Question 93.

May then by virtue of the command of Christ, as also according to the doctrine and practice of the apostles, no children be baptized?

Answer

We cannot see that the command of Christian Baptism extends to small children; and we do also not find in the whole New Testament, that the apostles in their ministry spoke to children; much less that they baptized such. Further, we cannot see, that children are or can be possessed of that which is represented by and required in baptism. For young children are not capable of receiving the doctrine of the gospel, nor have they committed any sins of which they can repent, or of which they can amend their lives, much less can they receive any matter of faith, or believe in Christ Jesus; as Paul plainly speaks of the acceptance of faith: "How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" And then confines faith to hearing, and hearing to the word of God (Rom. 10:14-17). So also, Moses testifies of children (Deut. 1, 39): "That they have no knowledge between good and evil. Yea, the Lord himself testifies of them, that they "cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand" (Jonah 4:11). And we also daily see of children, that if they are in the greatest danger of fire and water, they by no means know how to save themselves from them; thus, showing that they live in complete innocence, and without any knowledge of things about them.

Question 94.

Now since evangelical Christian Baptism should only be administered on faith, repentance, and amendment of life, - why then do some baptize infants, although these have not the said qualifications?

Answer

They do this on account of Original Sin, which according to their declaration, has come on all men through the fall of Adam; and this they endeavor to prove from the words of Paul (Rom. 5:12-14). To which Paul however adds, that through the death of Christ, they were reconciled, - the charge of original sin being taken away - and does consequently not rest any more on children (Rom. 5:18-19). Others who baptize infants, defend the practice from the will and discretion of the parents; as also from the practice of the old Roman Catholic Church: thus, baptizing their children on the faith of the church, and making them, as they think, members of the same. Again, others hold baptism as a sign of the covenant, through which children become united with the church, as their parents are. And as circumcision was a sign of the covenant, so, on the contrary, baptism was ordained and instituted as a like sign. Others again want to prove from Hebrews (11:6) that children have faith, if they are born of Christian parents - it being "impossible without faith to please God:" also from the words of Christ, when he says: "Suffer little children and forbid them not, to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:14). From this they conclude, that if the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, they must have faith, or else they could not please God; which they also infer from Matthew (18:6) where Christ says: "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Question 95.

How is it possible that there are so many different opinions amongst those who baptize infants, since they are agreed in the matter itself - their being so much misunderstanding as to the ground on which they administer baptism: is it not proper that we should have, in a matter of so much importance, a clear and express command, and a firm ground?

Answer

As far as we are concerned, we will not judge those who believe in infant baptism on account of their opinions; but will leave them to answer to God themselves for the practice of such baptism. But we for our part, cannot in the least agree with any of them; for we hold ourselves bound in this matter, to follow the express command and order of Christ; as also the

doctrine and order of the apostles, as before said; by whom the command is established, first to teach, and then to baptize those who have believed. As we see that the apostles every where followed this command, but do not find that they baptized children. Therefore, we believe this chief command, not from inference, or probable evidence, but from the infallible word of the holy gospel; so that we can say to the candidate for baptism with Philip: "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest." And here the words of Christ are in place: "Teach all nations, baptizing them. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved." Thus, we see that doctrine and faith go before baptism.

Question 96.

Is it then only men and women that are to be baptized, as is testified and shown of the people of Samaria (Acts 8:12)?

Answer

It must not be merely men and women; for the command concerns all nations; it being said: "Preach the gospel to every creature, that is, to all mankind. The law indeed concerned chiefly men, particularly the Ceremonial Law. But the gospel concerns all mankind, who have arrived at the age of discretion, and a knowledge of good and evil - whether they are married or unmarried - and who have ears to hear and hearts to understand the conditions of it, according to (Matt. 11:29). Who voluntarily take upon themselves the yoke of Christ to follow him, and who - from the hearing of and faith in the gospel - say with the eunuch: "What doth hinder me to be baptized" (Acts 8:36)? Who thus feel themselves impelled to yield to the requisitions of the gospel; as did the people at the day of Pentecost. For those who gladly received the words of Peter, were baptized.

Question 97.

Is there then a certain age appointed at which people are to be baptized, as the Lord God had appointed the eighth day for circumcision; or, as many think, that Christ was baptized in his thirtieth year?

Answer

In respect of the administration and reception of Christian Baptism, we do not find any certain age appointed, at which a person is to receive it, as in the case of circumcision. Nor do we read that Christ was baptized at the age of thirty years; but indeed, that he was still considered as a son of

Joseph when he was about that age (Luke 3:23). Thus, we see that the baptism of the gospel is not confined to any certain age; but rather, that it depends on the emotion of the human mind; that is, that a person should receive it when he finds himself convinced and impelled by the power of the living word of God to yield obedience to God and Christ; at the same time amending his life, and believing the gospel (Mark 1:15). Now when a person has come to this state, then is the proper time for him to be baptized “for the remission of sins,” as Peter exhorts (Acts 2:38); and Paul remarks that Ananias directed him to do (Acts 22:16).

Question 98.

Are men’s sins pardoned and washed off through baptism?

Answer

The sins which men do, are not washed off by external baptism, as this is literally expressed by Ananias; else it would be necessary to practice this continually, as was done under the law with the sin offering. For if any one sinned against the law or became impure, he had to sacrifice, purify himself, and become reconciled to God. But for this purpose, baptism is not instituted - to apply it at any time for the purification of sin (Heb. 9:22-23). So, Peter also says in respect of baptism, that it is “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God (1 Pet. 3:21). For after we have received baptism “unto repentance and amendment of life, on faith in Jesus Christ, the same secures unto us the pardon of sins committed; which takes place through the precious blood of Christ - the free and open “fountain for sin and uncleanness,” of which Zechariah prophesied (Zech. 13:1), and whereby he signifies the death of Christ: - “In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins” (Col. 1:14). So that it is not water in baptism, that has the power and efficacy to take away sin, and cleanse men from it. “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Article Thirteenth, Of the Fruits and Works of Faith

Question 99.

Now if we have received Christian Baptism on faith, knowledge of sin, and pardon of the same; is this sufficient to salvation, or must yet something more be done in order to be saved?

Answer

Yes. For baptism binds the person who believes in Jesus Christ, and is baptized, to different things, as well in temporal as in spiritual matters, as these matters are comprehended in the gospel; that is, to observe and give proof of the doctrine of the gospel. For after the Lord Jesus had commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all nations, "baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" - he also added: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matt. 28:19-20). To this Paul also refers when he says: "Know ye not, that so many of us were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore, we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4). So, Paul also exhorts (Phil. 2:12): "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Question 100.

Now since baptism, on faith in Jesus Christ, is not sufficient to salvation, but there must be, as I perceive, yet something more done, in what then does this consist, or what may it be?

Answer

Yes, certainly, there must be yet something more done to obtain salvation; namely, that we bring forth fruits of faith as a good tree in the vineyard that does not "cumber the ground" (Luke 13:7). Yea, that we may be found as fruitful grafts - grafted into the spiritual olive-tree Jesus Christ; as Paul teaches (Rom. 11:24). For such Christ himself calls fruitful branches in him - who is the "true vine" (John 15:5). And of all such it is required, that they "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith they are called" (Eph. 4:1). Yea, as good trees, that bring forth fruits worthy of conversion; who give as much diligence as possible to excel in good works (Tit. 3:1-8). For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them, says Paul (Eph. 2:10; Tit. 2:14). Consequently, there must be - with such - a total

conversion and change of life. "For as they yield their members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now they must (after their baptism) yield their members servants to righteousness and holiness" (Rom. 6). To which the words of Christ also refer, when he says: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Question 101.

What is intimated to the candidate for baptism at the reception of the same, when he is "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Answer

A great deal; and this comprises the chief articles through which salvation has been effected for him, and without which no salvation could have been obtained.

1. That God the Father is the origin from which the means of salvation are prepared and bestowed upon him. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). To which Paul also refers when he says. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:12-13). "But God who is rich in mercy, for the great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ (Eph. 2:4-5).

2. That he is baptized on his faith in the name of the Father, and has received the adoption of the sons of God; as Paul says: "For ye are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ" (Gal. 3:26). So that he has free access to the Father, and may address him in his prayers: "Our Father which art in heaven," &c. (Matt. 6:9). To which consolation Paul adds: "If we are children, then heirs; heirs of God: and joint heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17).

Question 102.

What does the name of Son show the candidate for baptism in the reception of the same?

Answer

1. That the Son of the living God is the means of his salvation. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins" (Col. 1:14). And not only so; but he is also through the Son redeemed from the power of hell and death (Heb. 2:14). So that he can say: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:55-57).

2. That Christ is his mediator and advocate with the Father. "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). And on the strength of this, John comforts the faithful members of Christ when he says: "My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

Question 103.

What is effected for the candidate for baptism, thereby, that he is baptized in the name of the Holy Ghost?

Answer

1. It shows unto him, that the Holy Ghost was a co-worker in the Divine Being, along with the Father and the Son, in the accomplishment of his salvation.

2. That he shall further abide with him as his comforter (John 14:16-17). Which "Spirit beareth witness with his spirit, that he is a child of God" (Rom. 8:16); having thus, if he walks like a faithful child, the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15). It is especially serviceable to the strengthening of all such in their pilgrimage, that they will - according to the promise of Christ - be guided by the Holy Spirit "into all truth" (John 16:13).

Question 104.

Should it claim the particular attention and consideration of such candidates for baptism, that they are "baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost?"

Answer

It necessarily claims the consideration of such, that through the holy appellation and reception of such baptism, they have become the adopted of God, as they should also consider themselves to be; as Paul says: "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). And again, he says: "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Rom. 12:1). Thus "showing what manner of spirit they are of" (Luke 9:55).

Article Fourteenth, Of the Lord's Supper, Or Breaking of Bread

Question 105.

Is there anything important and particular in the gospel, for persons baptized, to perform, as a chief commandment and precept of Christ?

Answer

The Lord Jesus has commanded all the members of his church or communion to observe his (the Lord's) Supper, which he has instituted with bread and wine, and also observed himself. For in the last night when he was betrayed and ate the last passover with his disciples, "he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, 'This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.' Likewise, also the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you'" (Luke 22:19-20). "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). And the holy and highly enlightened apostle Paul, sent out by the Lord Jesus to preach the gospel of God (Rom. 1:1) - after testifying how he received the command for observing the Lord's Supper - adds: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Question 106.

Was then the Lord's Supper also observed to his remembrance, by the Church, after his death?

Answer

Yes. For it is clear and evident, that the same was taught by the apostles in the primitive church, and observed by the believers of that time, as we read: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread and in prayers; and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart" (Acts 2:42-46). So, we also read that the believers at Troas met on a Sabbath "to break bread," when Paul passed that way, and that he then served them with the same (Acts 20:7-11). But as it was observed in a disorderly manner by the Corinthians, Paul reproved them on that account, and told them that they did not observe it as instituted by Christ, but to their own prejudice. He therefore represented to them the proper manner of observing this Sacrament, as he had "received of the Lord;" as is amply to be seen (1 Cor. 11:18-29).

Question 107.

Does it then stand so well with believers, that if they are baptized on their faith, and observe the Sacrament (Lord's Supper) or the breaking of bread externally, that they can console themselves with the hope of eternal life?

Answer

Just as external baptism alone brings no salvation; unless we do that on our part, which is required of us in the gospel; so can the external rite or observance of the Sacrament, not save the person baptized, if he does not endeavor also to fulfill his Christian calling, as is required of the faithful children of God. Therefore, the apostle Paul, when representing to the believers at Corinth the observance of the Sacrament, enjoins, that each one before partaking of the same, shall examine his life and conversation - as to how he stands with God and his neighbor in respect of the same. He says: "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Cor. 11:28-29).

Question 108.

Were it not better to abstain from partaking of the Sacrament, so as not to partake of it to one's own damnation; since people are so frail and fallible, yea, frequently commit sin before they are aware of it?

Answer

Not to partake of the Sacrament, or to neglect the same, from such a view, or from such thoughts, would be done more from contempt for the command of Christ, than from the fear of God, and might easily be an occasion for continuing in sin. But if we seriously take into consideration the command of Christ, and thereby find ourselves bound to the observance of the Sacrament, it will incite us the more powerfully to give strict heed to our life and conversation - to avoid sin - and bring our faults the more earnestly before the Lord - and to pray for the pardon of our sins; and thus the observance of the Sacrament will be serviceable to our comfort and pardon through the merits of Christ; since Christ says in his word: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Luke 22:20; Matt. 26:28). But to continue knowingly and willfully in sin, and to abstain from partaking of the Sacrament; thereby thinking to get clear of God's just punishment, is rather more a proof of wickedness, than of the fear of God. For he who from contempt neglected to keep the passover amongst the Israelites, did not go unpunished (Num. 9:13). Much less will he go unpunished, who despises the command of Christ. And although those were not to keep the passover who were, according to the law, unclean; yet was the condition annexed, that they had to purify themselves, and keep the passover on "the fourteenth day of the second month." And he who did not do this was to be "cut off from among his people" (Num. 9:11-13). Thus, the command of Christ is established (Luke 22:19): "This do in remembrance of me." So also, Paul teaches (1 Cor. 11:28): "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Which teaches that we are not to stand still in this work, but to continue in it. If we then find ourselves, by examination, not pure before God, but guilty of something, we must first become reconciled to God and our neighbor, and then "eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."

Question 109.

Are then the bread and wine of the Sacrament, the real body and blood of Jesus Christ; since they are so called by Christ, and it is so strictly declared by Paul, that "he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself?"

Answer

The Lord Jesus in instituting his Supper, indeed speaks of them (bread and wine) as such, namely: "This is my body; this is my blood" (Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24). This declaration however - that the external bread and wine of the Sacrament are the real body and blood of Christ - must not be literally understood; but in a spiritual and mysterious sense; as is to be seen from the conversation of Christ with the Jews about the eating of his flesh and the drinking of his blood (John 6:54-55). As this was however literally understood by the Jews and many of his disciples, he said: "The flesh profiteth nothing: the words I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63). So, we are also to understand the words of Christ about the institution of the Holy Sacrament, in a spiritual sense; and therefore, he concludes the matter with the words: "This do in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19). The same language is also twice used by Paul in reference to such bread and wine, as follows: "This do in remembrance of me" (Cor. 11:24-25). And since the apostles, whenever they speak of the Sacrament, call it the "breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42-46; 20:7-11; 1 Cor. 10:16-11; 23:26), it cannot be understood by us as the real body and blood of Christ; but must be understood in a spiritual sense, as a holy sign of the body and blood of Christ; as Paul also calls and represents it (1 Cor. 10:16).

Question 110.

Now if the said bread is merely common bread; such bread as we use for food, how then can we eat it unworthily, to our own damnation?

Answer

Although the passover of the Jews consisted merely of the flesh of lambs, such as was eaten by them otherwise; yet no one that was uncircumcised - no heathen nor Jew that was according to the law unclean - was permitted to eat thereof. Such were not permitted to eat thereof.

1. Because it was an institution of the law.
2. Because it consisted of meat set apart for the worship of God.
3. Because it was to be kept as a memorial of their (the Jews') deliverance from Egypt; when the "destroyer" passed over their houses, and spared their firstborn. And

4. Because it brought to their minds the knowledge and remembrance of the Divine favors shown to their ancestors, and that it was a command given by God, as already remarked. Now then since the passover was expressly set apart for these purposes, it was a matter of God, and sacred in his sight; and therefore, it was also to be kept sacred by the Israelites, and partaken of in purity. And thus, we are also to understand the matter of the breaking of bread at the Sacrament; namely, that it is to be observed.

First, on account of its being commanded by Christ; who instituted it in memory of his sufferings and death, and enjoined it as a holy ordinance; and that it is therefore also to be considered by us as holy, and thus observed.

2. Because it (the breaking of bread) represents and signifies to us - for the proper, separate observance of the same - such dear and precious things, of the sacrifice of Christ, the breaking of his body, the shedding of his blood on the cross for our reconciliation with God, the pardon of our sins and our preservation to eternal life. Wherefore it is proper that we should observe and regard it - in the fear of God - as holy. Even as it is called by Paul, "The communion of the blood of Christ," when he says: "The cup of the blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16)?

Question 111.

Are there yet more such comparisons and expressions in Holy Scripture, where to external things the name of divine things is given, and whereby it is shown that the words of Christ about the bread and wine of his supper, were spoken in signification of his body and blood?

Answer

Holy Scripture is full of expressions which signify internal, divine, spiritual, and heavenly things; and which things are denominated by the names of external things, which represent and show to us divine, spiritual, and heavenly things. Thus, Christ calls himself the "door of his sheep," and says: "The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:7-11); the "true vine;" and believers "the branches" (John 15:5); "the way" (John 14:6); his Father the "husbandman," and Peter a "rock." And Joseph said to

Pharaoh in explaining his dream, that the seven “good kine” and the seven “good ears,” were “seven years of plenty;” and the seven “ill-favored kine” and “seven empty ears,” were seven years of famine (Gen. 41:26-29). Likewise, did he say of the dreams of the chief butler and chief baker, that the “three branches” and the “three baskets” were three days (Gen. 40:12-18). So, they also saw and experienced themselves what their dreams signified. Further, David calls the water which the “three mighty men” fetched at the risk of their lives, at the gate of Bethlehem, and from amongst their enemies, the “blood of the men,” and “poured it out unto the Lord” (2 Sam. 23:16-17). As Paul also speaks of the two wives of Abraham, and their two sons, Isaac and Ishmael: “Which things (he says) are an allegory;” namely, that they signify the “two covenants” (Gal. 4:24). Thus, he also speaks of the rock which Moses smote in the wilderness, and from which water issued; that this “rock,” namely, was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). Now these things are called that which they signify; and such expressions there are in great abundance in Scripture.

Question 112.

Must then the Sacrament be only observed in memory of the death and sufferings of Christ?

Answer

The Lord God not only commanded the children of Israel to eat the passover, and to celebrate the feast of the passover, in memory of their deliverance from Egypt; but also to renew the memory of the faithful fulfilment of the promise given to their fathers; thereby reminding them of the favors of God; as the Lord remonstrated with them through Micah, when they had in a great measure ceased to regard these matters, when he says: “That ye may know the righteousness of the Lord” (Micah 6). Thus, must also the observance of the Lord’s Supper not serve us merely as a common memorial of the death and sufferings of Christ; but should remind us particularly of God’s great love and favors shown to us; inasmuch as he has bestowed unto us such a precious passover; namely, Christ, the beloved Son of God, who has been sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7); thereby showing that we are reconciled to him, and consequently have obtained peace with him through Jesus Christ (Rom. 5:1). Further it should remind us of what has been effected for us through the advent of Christ, as well as

through his doctrine, example, suffering, and death, in order that we may thereby remember his great love; through which we are so dearly bought; as Paul says: “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Question 113.

Does the observance and usage of the Lord’s Supper serve as a memorial and knowledge of the great favors of God, conferred upon us through Christ?

Answer

It serves all pious and godly persons in many respects, as a consolation, as a strengthening and encouragement in their pilgrimage; as also as an assurance, that:

1. The Lord’s Supper is left to them as a testament; as also that the sufferings and death of Christ redound to the pardon of their sins and the restoration of eternal life.

2. That just as they partake of bread and wine in the Holy Sacrament, so they shall also partake of Christ and his merits, as Christ says in a parable: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:51, 55-56). Therefore, Christ sets the cup of his supper before believers as a testament left by him, when he says: “This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you” (Luke 22:20). In whom they also have a faithful assistant, who watches over them like a shepherd over his flock (Psalm 23:1; Matt. 28:20).

Thirdly and lastly, it represents to all believers the unity of the spirit, which they have with one another through the unity of faith, and the hope of salvation, conferred upon them by Christ; wherein they are through this ordinance, all one; provided they show the unity of the spirit, as Paul says: “For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread” (1 Cor. 10:17).

Question 114.

Is there also a set time when and how often the Lord's Supper is to be observed by the church, as was the case with the passover amongst the Israelites?

Answer

God had appointed the children of Israel a certain time when they were to observe the passover; namely, according to their year, on the fourteenth day of the first month (Exodus 12:6). But as it regards the Lord's Supper, we find no fixed time when and how often it is to be observed by the church; there being no such time appointed in the primitive church; which is evident from (Acts 2:42-47), where it is said: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer. And breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart." And at Troas it was, in consequence of an accidental visitation of Paul, observed on a Sabbath evening (Acts 20:7-11). However it is well to be observed, that as often as we partake of this Sacrament, we "shew the Lord's death till he comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Article Fifteenth, Of the Commandment of Love

Question 115.

Has the Lord Jesus, besides Baptism and the Sacrament, yet also given other high commandments to his Church, which were not given under the Old Testament Dispensation?

Answer

The Lord has indeed given some such commandments; but none that abrogate the chief commandments of the law of Moses: but such indeed as make said law more perfect and binding. For Christ says: "I am not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it" (Matt. 5:17). But particularly is this to be observed in reference to the commandment of love, which is the chief commandment: yea, the whole substance of the law of Moses; namely: To "love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our might" (Deut. 6:5). Further, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev. 19:18). "On these two commandments (says Christ) hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt. 22:40). That is, that we should well stand the test of these commandments, and walk in perfect love, and that in the exercise of such

love, all that is contained in the law and the prophets is fulfilled; as Paul testifies: “The end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned” (1 Tim. 1:5).

Question 116.

Where and how is the commandment of love made and cited more perfectly by Christ, than it was in the law of Moses?

Answer

Under the law of Moses, the love of our neighbor was not understood to extend farther than to their brethren, the Israelites, who alone were considered as neighbors. Under the gospel however, “brotherly love and charity” (general love) are required (2 Pet. 1:7). For Christ says: “If ye love them which love you, what reward have you? do not even the publicans the same” (Matt. 5:46)? And when a “certain lawyer” asked Christ, who, according to the law, was his neighbor, he made to him the comparison about the Samaritan (Luke 10:29); thereby declaring unto him that he was to exercise love towards all those who stood in need of his help; whereby he teaches, that not only he who was his brother according to the covenant of circumcision, was his neighbor; but that we should show our labors of love, without distinction, to all those to whom we can be of service. At the same time, he also enjoined brotherly love as strictly as it was ever commanded in the law, and said to his disciples: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:34-35). “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). Therefore, Peter also so strictly and earnestly enjoins love, when he says: “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). And not only “brotherly kindness,” but also “charity;” that is, love towards all mankind (2 Pet. 1:7); yea, also towards our enemies. (Matt 5:44).

Article Sixteenth, On Revenge

Question 117.

Is there then, in this doctrine of showing love towards all men, without distinction, nothing contrary to the law; since the Jews had to fight against their enemies through the hand of the Lord; whom the Lord God gave into

their hands: how then must a Christian act in this matter, when he is to show love towards all men?

Answer

It pleased God at that time to exterminate the seven different proscribed nations, who were his enemies, through the Jews; with whom the latter were not permitted to enter into any treaty of peace, nor their children into marriage relations (Exodus 34:12-16). Other wise they had to show love towards all strangers in their country (Exodus 23:9). But now that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself" (2 Cor. 5:19; 1 John 2:2); our benevolence must be shown to all men, without distinction, according to the words of Peter (2 Pet. 1:7), as is also expressly taught by Christ: "Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. Ye have heard that it hath been said, thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. For if ye love them that love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so" (Matt. 5:38-47)? In a similar manner the apostle Paul exhorts believers, when he says: "Dearly beloved, revenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore, if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head" (Rom. 12:19-20). Thus, must orthodox Christians through well-doing, silence the ignorance of unwise and foolish men.

Question 118.

Has true love - the love required in the gospel - also certain signs, whereby it may be known?

Answer

Certainly, that love which extends to all mankind, has also certain signs. For wherever the true love of God is founded in the hearts of men, they are also enkindled in love towards their fellow creatures. "He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now" (1

John, 2:9). "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth" (I Cor. 13:4-6). "Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. 13:10). Thus, a true Christian is, through love, free from all desire of revenge."

Article Seventeenth, On the Swearing of Oaths

Question 119.

Are there yet more such matters to which Christ alluded - and which are practiced by worldly governments - but are forbidden in the law of Christ?

Answer

It is also a plain commandment of Christ, that in testimony about disputes about temporal matters, we should not swear an oath, which is otherwise customary under worldly governments, but which is no commandment of the law; there being however a commandment in the law, that we "shall not swear falsely" (Lev. 19:12). The swearing of oaths was however customary among men from the time of Abraham; as is to be seen in the case of Abraham himself; who took an oath from his servant (Gen. 24:2-3). And Isaac bound himself by an oath to king Abimelech in a treaty of peace (Gen. 26:31). So also, Jacob and Laban confirmed their "covenant" by an oath (Gen. 31:53). Now since the swearing of oaths is no commandment of God, and matters of truth can be as strongly attested without an oath, as with it, Christ directs his people, whose calling it is to "speak the truth in love" (Eph. 4:15), to pursue the shortest and safest way of truth. He says: "Ye have heard that it has been said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you: Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth: for it is his footstool; neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the Great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matt. 5:33-37). From this it is to be seen, that the Lord Jesus does not merely abolish and forbid that which was adopted by man without

commandment; but that he at the same time forbids that which the law mentions about “swearing falsely,” and also directs how we can testify to the truth without swearing; as also that his testimony was founded on the fact, that he did not “come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it” (Matt. 5:17).

Article Eighteenth, On Matrimony

Question 120.

Are there yet more things changed, or made perfect, by the Lord Jesus, which are also mentioned in the law?

Answer

Concerning the state of matrimony, Christ made amends for the abuses and decline which had crept into it in consequence of being suffered under the law of Moses, and also reproved them. Of which God also complains, that men acted in this matter contrary to his will (Mal. 2:14-15). Further, Christ also again brought the first state of matrimony to its primitive order. For when he was asked by the Pharisees, whether it was “lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?” he answered: “Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning, made them male and female, and said, for this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and cleave unto his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder” (Matt. 19:4-6). And when the Jews again asked: “Why did then Moses command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away?” Jesus answered: “Moses, because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marries her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matt. 19:7-9). From this it is clearly to be seen, that Christ teaches all Christians, that a man (except in case of fornication), is bound to his wife by the band of matrimony, as long as she lives, and that the wife is also bound to her husband by the same tie as long as he lives. “But if her husband be dead, she is at liberty to be married to whom she will; only in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39).

Question 121.

Are then all marriages made by the Lord, as the words of Christ purport?

Answer

As God is an omniscient God, and his actions are incomprehensible to man, we cannot come to a settled conclusion about this matter. But if we take into consideration the providence of God, we must confess, that there are also persons united by God in matrimony, who enter into this state for their mutual punishment; or who must be a punishment to others thereby; as is to be seen in the case of Sampson, whose marriage became an occasion of punishment to the Philistines (Judges 14:1-2). So, we also see how married people frequently live to the punishment of each other. But where the true fear of God exists with people, there we may be assured that he is the author of marriage, for “great is his mercy toward them that fear him” (Psalm 103:11). And of this Abraham was assured, when he sent for a wife for his son Isaac; and not knowing who she would be, he said to his servant, who was in such matters considerate and cautious: “The Lord shall send his angel before thee, and thou shalt take a wife unto my son” (Gen. 24:7). Now when the servant met her, he turned to God in prayer; and when Laban understood the message, he said: “The thing proceedeth from the Lord: we cannot speak unto thee, bad or good” (Gen. 24:50).

Question 122.

Are there also means whereby we may come to such a state of marriage, and whereby we may be assured, that the Lord God has appointed a consort for man?

Answer

There are indeed means whereby we may be assured, that we have come to the matrimonial state by the direction of God, if we only fear the Lord (Psalm 103:11), as was said to king Asa: “The Lord is with you, while ye be with him” (2 Chron. 15:2). “A good wife is a good portion, which shall be given in the portion of them that fear the Lord” (Ecclesiasticus 26:3). Of which we have an example in the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when we observe how they feared God, and how through the means of prayer they obtained the consorts appointed for them by the Lord. For “the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears open unto their cry” (Psalm 34:15). So, we also see that Jacob prayed God to be with him on his

journey, when for the purpose of obtaining a consort, he moved from his father's house to Mesopotamia" (Gen. 28:20). "The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much (James 5:16). And the apostle John says: "This is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1 John 5:14).

Question 123.

Is not every one at liberty to enter into a state of matrimony with whom he pleases?

Answer

The faithful Christian is not at liberty to do so. But the wholesome doctrine of the gospel - when properly observed by him - will direct him how to act in this matter. But that it is not pleasing to God, that men should enter into the matrimonial state according to the dictates of their carnal minds, is to be seen from the marriages before the flood. For it is said: "The sons of God saw the daughters of men that they were fair, and they took them wives of all which they choose" (Gen. 6:2). So were also the children of Israel - who were otherwise called the people of God - expressly forbidden to intermarry with the sons and daughters of the land of Canaan, whom the Lord had proscribed. So, we are also not permitted to marry those who are too nearly related to us by consanguinity (Lev. 18:6-18). Beyond these exceptions, however, we are at liberty to marry whom we please; only so that - according to the admonition of Paul - it be done "in the Lord" (Cor. 7:39). That is, that those, who intend entering into the state of matrimony, do so in prayer and in the fear of God. Under these conditions then, they are at liberty to marry as they please: the rich to the poor, the old to the young, widows to the single; that is, if such persons are free in their conscience from others, and are of the same religious faith, and attend the same worship.

Question 124.

May then not persons - men and women - join themselves together of their own accord, without this being done by a minister of religion?

Answer

All intimate connection between men and women without the bond of matrimony, is called fornication; about which we have a command in the law of Moses: "There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a

sodomite of the sons of Israel” (Deut. 23:17). Therefore, Paul also says: “To avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). Also: “Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge” (Heb. 13:4).

Article Nineteenth, Of Ecclesiastical Punishment, Or Excommunication

Question 125.

Now if any member of the church peradventure transgresses any of these commandments of Christ, or acts contrary to them, is there also some punishment ordained by the church for such transgression?

Answer

If such transgression takes place willfully - out of contempt for the commandment - the person so transgressing, is disobedient to the gospel (Rom. 2:8). Particularly so, if his course of life is such, that he thereby gives others occasion to speak evil of the same, and the doctrine of the gospel is thereby blasphemed. But the conduct of such person is to be examined into from different points of view: whether it consists of faults, errors, or intentional and voluntary sins and transgressions, with or without repentance; as also with the difference, whether the offence exists between him and God, or between him and his brother or neighbor. Now if such offence is only the consequence of an error, or an over hasty action, whereby the erring person overstepped the bounds of his calling, such matter may be made good again by a brotherly admonition, exhortation, and instruction, and repentance on the part of the offender, according to the doctrine of Paul: “If a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). “Him that is weak in the faith, receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations (Rom. 14:1). So, Sirach also gives an instructive admonition in referring to evil reports, when he says: “Admonish a friend, it may be he hath not done it: and if he has done it, that he does it no more. Admonish thy friend, it may be he hath not said it: and if he has, that he speak it not again. Admonish a friend: for many times it is a slander, and believe not every tale (Ecclesiasticus 19:13-15). And when this is done in love, it may be serviceable to much good; and thus, it

behooves us to do - according to the doctrine of Christ when one brother sins against another, for Christ says: "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church" (Matt. 18:15-17).

Question 126.

Must we then proceed and act differently with those who sin against God?

Answer

In such case we must proceed with caution, and well distinguish, whether the sins committed are such against which damnation is pronounced in Scripture, or whether they are such as may be atoned for through repentance; or whether the offender proves himself obstinate, and continues in his wicked course of life, as Paul says of such: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God" (Rom. 2:5). Now in such case - in such transgression of the commandments of Christ - in consequence of which the church is evil spoken of from those who are "without" - the sentence of the church must according to the instructions of Christ - be pronounced against such offender; and if there is no heart-felt repentance and sorrow for sin - no desire to avoid evil - observable in such person, he must be cut off from the church as a dead and unfit member, and swept out as a leaven; and, according to the instruction of Christ, be considered "as a heathen and publican" (Matt. 18:17). And so also Paul writes: "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump" (1 Cor. 5:6-7). "For what have I to do, to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore, put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:12-13). "Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear. I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that thou observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (1 Tim. 5:20-21).

Article Twentieth, Of Excommunication or Exclusion from the Church

Question 127.

Now if such persons as before alluded to, are punished by the church, for their wicked and unchristian course of life, is this done merely for the terror of others?

Answer

It is not done merely as a terror to others, and as an example of the punishment of sin; but also, as a warning to the offender, in order to bring him - according to the commandment of Christ and his apostles - to repentance and amendment of life. So, it is also to serve as a declaration, that the church will not suffer itself to be blasphemed on his account, by others, or by those "without." Therefore, such person is to be so far shunned, that he has nothing more to do in the church and its communion; yea, that he is not recognized by the brotherly kiss or salutation; no more so, than one who never was connected with the church, until the time of his conversion, his amendment of life and conversation.

Question 128.

How are we to conduct ourselves towards such, so long as they are without the pale of the church?

Answer

If they still adhere to the church, hear the word of God, are no blasphemers and abusers - in such case we are diligently to exhort them again to become reconciled to God and the church; and in as far as we see that they are in earnest, we are to reach them the helping hand to their restoration; nevertheless, this must be done with great caution and foresight namely so, that the offender does not fall in too great sorrow; and that we do not act against God's will in such case. But when the person thus excluded from the church, still continues in vice, sin, and shame, and there is no hope for his amendment, we must refer such case to the just judgment of God; but for all that, perform God's commandment towards him, that is, show and exercise Christian love towards him as towards our neighbor (Matt. 5:48; 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Gal. 5:14; 6:10).

Article Twenty-First, Of the Reception of the Penitent

Question 129.

Now if such a person as above alluded to, has, through proper reproof and exhortation, come to conversion and amendment of life, how is he then to be dealt with?

Answer

In such case the church is bound to show cordial love and sympathy for him; and out of joy at his return, to encourage in him the hope, that if he continue in his good intention, he will again be received as a member of the church of Christ, and become united to the same; as is clearly shown in the parable of the lost son, when Christ says: "Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth" (Luke 15:10). So, it behooves us, according to this, again to receive such a one with joy; as Paul writes to the Corinthians: "Sufficient to such a man is this punishment, which was inflicted of many. So that contrariwise ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him" (2 Cor. 2:6-7).

Question 130.

Has then civil government no power to inflict punishment in the Christian Church; or is such government not recognized in the doctrine of the gospel as a legitimate authority?

Answer

The office of such government consists in the administration of temporal affairs, and is not abrogated by the gospel; and although such government does not appear to be instituted by Christ in the evangelical church (Luke 22:25-26), yet believers are taught and commanded in the gospel to be "subject unto the higher powers," for Christ says: "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things which are God's" (Matt. 22:21). But in whatever concerns spiritual and divine things, "we ought to obey God rather than man" (Acts 5:29). For Christ himself is appointed as the head of the church; who prescribes rules, privileges, and laws for the same; which are - according to the word of God - to be administered spiritually; as shown before from (Matt. 18:15-17); and as Christ further declares (Matt. 16:19); "Whatsoever thou shalt bind

on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Question 131.

Is there also testimony in Holy Scripture of such great and heinous sins, of which it may be understood, that they are bound in heaven, and are damnable, if people die therein?

Answer

Such testimony we have in abundance; yea, also very clear testimony, how that God is displeased with a carnal and sinful course of life; as Paul mentions at different places - as for instance - in (Rom. 1:29-32; 8:6-7); at which latter place he says: “To be carnally minded is death, and enmity against God.” And in (1 Cor. 6:9-10), he says: “Neither fornicators, nor idolators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.” So, it is further said of others of a similar character. “That they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God;” understand, such as continue in such a course of life, as Paul further testifies, when he says: “If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live” (Rom. 8:13).

Article Twenty-Second, Of the Office of Civil Government

Question 132.

Are there not also many sins amongst the afore-mentioned which are punished by the civil law; whereby the delinquent may also be condemned to death; how then is the church to act in such case?

Answer

There are two different kinds of laws; namely, a spiritual law, and a worldly law. The spiritual law is the Scripture, written as the word of God; which is to be used in the church - in all cases - as a guide or rule, to distinguish between good and evil. He that is spiritual, “compares spiritual things with spiritual.” “For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the

thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12). If therefore any matter in the church is adjudged according to the word of God, the persons appointed to judge the same, do not adjudge such matter according to their own understanding; but the word of God speaks the sentence, which convinces the heart of the sinner, that he is guilty before God, and that he deserves such punishment. “For true and righteous are his judgments” (Rev. 19:2). But the sentence of the church, which is passed upon the sinner, according to the word of God, is not intended for his destruction, but for his amendment - for the “destruction of the flesh, (that is, the destruction of the lusts of the flesh) that the spirit may be saved” (1 Cor. 5:5); that such person may again be converted and saved; as the word of God speaks of such sinners (Isaiah 1:16-18; Ezekiel 18:21-23; Luke 15:32). And from the sin from which the sinner is loosed through his re-reception into the church, he shall also be loosed in heaven (Matt. 16:19).

Question 133.

By what authority then, do civil judges and civil governments judge criminals, if this is not done according to the sense of the gospel?

Answer

The civil laws, according to which criminals are judged, and many of them condemned to death, are not founded on the doctrine of the gospel; but they are such laws as were in part given by God to the children of Israel under the Old Testament dispensation; otherwise, such as were given by rulers high in authority, or by wise men for the welfare and in behalf of their countries’ subjects; and were consequently ratified by kings and emperors, and other high authorities, for the peace and tranquility of their countries and cities; as also for the punishment of the bad and protection of the pious. Wherefore Peter also exhorts all faithful Christians in the following language: “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme, or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evil-doers, and for the praise of them that do well” (1 Pet. 2:13-14). And when the apostle Paul stood bound before the judgment, in consequence of the envy of the Jews - although he was free from every crime - he “appealed unto Caesar,” as the head of the highest worldly authority at that time (Acts 25:11).

Question 134.

Have then civil governments the power to make laws, whereby judges may judge men, yea even condemn them to death?

Answer

“There is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation” (Rom. 13:1-2). As also Daniel says: “He removeth kings, and setteth up kings” (Dan. 2:21). So did also the Lord Jesus Christ himself, submit to the paying of tribute money, and commanded to “render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s (Matt. 22:21). “Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing” (Rom. 13:5-6). So that we are in duty bound, for the Lord’s sake, not merely to “be subject unto the higher powers; but also - as Paul teaches - “to make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks” - not only for men in general - but also “for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (Tim. 2:1-2). “For he is the minister of God to thee for good. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the sword in vain: for he is the minister of God, a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil. Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom is due; fear to whom fear is due; honor to whom honor is due” (Rom. 13:4-7).

Question 135.

Must we then submit and be obedient to civil government in all things; and if so, how then can we at the same time follow the law of Christ and the government; since they frequently militate against one another?

Answer

Since civil governments derive their power from God, it is evident that they also depend on God; therefore, we must regard the commandments of God more than those of worldly governments. Consequently, whenever the commandments of worldly authority militate against those of God, the latter must - according to the example of the apostles - have the preference. For when they (the apostles) were forbidden to preach any more in the name of Jesus, they answered: “Whether it be right in the

sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye (Acts 4:19). Therefore, it also behooves us to obey God above all things, without which we cannot - agreeably to our faith, and according to the example of Paul - have a good conscience before God. For Paul says, he “exercised himself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16). Thus, whatever we are in duty bound to do towards civil government, according to the words of God, that we should willingly do; but not that which is contrary to the word of God, and militates against it.

Question 136.

But if government would insist upon having its commands observed and executed, or else attach punishment to non-performance, how would we have to escape or resist the same?

Answer

All that we could do against such proceedings would have to be done in all meekness and discretion. We would have to entreat government in such case, not to burden our hearts and consciences; stating that it was not from any evil design that we refused yielding obedience to its commands; but from fear of acting against the commandments of God, which we were not permitted to do. But should our prayer not be regarded, then we would have rather to suffer every thing that God would permit to be done unto us, than to yield obedience in violation of our conscience, and act contrary to the commandments of God. Yea, in such case we would have to consider well the words of Peter, when he says: “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully” (1 Pet. 2:19). But if our sufferings should be too grievous to be borne, or we should not be tolerated on account of not yielding the demanded obedience, then Christ directs us as to the ways and means we are to adopt, and how we are to act in such case; namely, “When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another” (Matt. 10:23).

Question 137.

Is the state of the Christian of such a nature, that he is to bear every thing that a worldly government and unreasonable men may do unto him? And if so - is not then his calling a hard one? And how do the words of

Christ agree therewith, when he says: “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:30)?

Answer

Such thoughts and imaginations arise from the weakness of the flesh, and from human nature; and as long as these have the upper hand in a person, it is very hard for him to suffer all things which may come in his way. But where the love of God reigns in the hearts of men through the power of saving faith, there the Lord is their strength and vital power; so that they fear no misfortune that may befall them on account of the testimony of his word (Psalm 27:1). For their hearts are firmly fixed in the Lord; so that they may well say with David: “Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:25-26). “Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:20). For this reason, also the life of a Christian is called a warfare, in which he must spend his days “like a hireling” (Job 7:1). Wherefore Paul also exhorts to “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12); and thereby to “rejoice in hope; to be patient in tribulation, to continue instant in prayer” (Rom. 12:12). For where evil is endured and wrong suffered for conscience’s sake, there the pious soul is “strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might” (Eph. 6:10); and can thus by meeting his adversary by “well-doing,” “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men” (1 Pet. 2:15). For “when a man’s ways please the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7).

Question 138.

Now if striving and suffering are the duty of Christians - striving in the faith like Job - on what then does their hope rest, and on what is it founded?

Answer

That striving thus is the calling of orthodox Christians, has already been fully mentioned; in which their Lord and chief has gone before them, for he says: “If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; for the servant is not greater than his Lord” (John 15:20). “Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake” (Matt. 24:9). “Yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doeth God a service” (John 16:2).

Therefore, he also says: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me" (Luke 9:23). For "through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Acts 14:22). Now since the highly enlightened apostle Paul - as a faithful follower of his Lord in this warfare, and as a pattern of all the faithful - has testified this in the foregoing quotation - namely, that we must thus enter into the kingdom of God; - this gives good encouragement - is even a great comfort in this life, so that we may well say: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Namely to us, who "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" (2 Cor. 4:17-18). "Because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow his steps" (1 Pet. 2:21). For the ground on which our hope rests, is the word of the Lord, which, as Paul says, "was written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). And this was also the comfort and protection of the prophet Jeremiah, in all his sufferings; for he says: "Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart" (Jer. 15:16). And David expresses himself in a similar manner, (Psalm 119:92); and Paul says: "We know that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed" (Rom. 5:3-5). Now although the pious are tried through many sufferings, yet "is their hope full of immortality" (Wisdom of Solomon 3:4); so that they can say: "Whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Rom. 14:8).

Article Twenty-Third, Of the Resurrection of the Dead

Question 139.

Shall then pious and orthodox Christians, who thus strive "through faith, never die; while, nevertheless, the contrary is seen and certified - it being "appointed unto man once to die" (Heb. 9:27).

Answer

In Holy Scripture there are two different lives, and two different deaths spoken of; and we must therefore distinguish in what manner the righteous does not die; since it is said (Heb. 9:27), that "it is appointed unto man once to die, as it is also manifest that all men - the pious as well as the wicked - are subject to natural death, and have to die; as Solomon says: "The wise man dieth as the fool" (Ecclesiastes 2:16). For although Adam lived 930 years, Methuselah 969, Noah 950, Abraham 175; and many pious people lived to a great age; yet was the end of them all: "And they died." "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22).

Question 140.

Is there then yet also another death, except the natural death; and another life, except the natural life?

Answer

Undoubtedly there is yet another death, except the natural death; and as also another life, except the natural life. For natural death must be preceded by a spiritual death, (a death unto sin) if we will otherwise come to that state in which we shall - as the wise man says - "Never die." In which spiritual death, (death unto sin) we remain naturally alive, but come thereby to a state in which we die in the Lord, and yet live afterwards, and never die; that is, if we die unto our worldly lusts, thereby that we crucify and mortify our carnal affections and lusts, which "war against the soul," as Paul says (Rom. 6:11): "Reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord." And (Col. 3:5): "For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." "And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts" (Gal. 5:24). Such can then say: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21). Thus, men can die unto sin, and live unto God. And if they die a natural death - according to the decree of God - as far as their bodies are concerned, they go the way of all the earth; but as it concerns their souls, they go from this temporal and toilsome life to an eternal and happy rest. "For their works do follow them" (Rev. 14:13). "He (the righteous) shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness" (Isaiah 57:2). Thus, we see that we must not understand under natural death, eternal death.

That there is however also another life after this natural life, is proved from the words of Christ, when he says: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live" (John 11:24).

Question 141.

Shall then the pious - who first die a spiritual death (a death unto sin) and then also a natural death - only live again, but the wicked remain in death?

Answer

Not only the pious - after having laid off this temporal life, or died a natural death, and are buried - shall again be raised, and made alive; but also, the ungodly. For since all the descendants of Adam have fallen under the power of death, through one man's - Adam's - sin, although they "have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression;" so also through one man, Christ, comes the resurrection of the dead (Rom. 5:12-14). "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. 15:22). Of this also Daniel testifies in the following words: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (Dan. 12:2). "Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust" (Isaiah 26:19). And Christ himself says: "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his (Christ's) voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). So, Christ also says to Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten son into the world, that we might live through him" (1 John 4:9).

Question 142.

How can this come to pass, that the dead, who are moldered in the earth, can again arise and live?

Answer

The precise nature of how this will come to pass, is not necessary for us to know; much less to search into it. That it will however come to pass through the power and might of God, is abundantly revealed to us; as David testifies, when he says: "Thou turnest man to destruction; and sayest: Return ye children of men" (Psalm 90:3). And Job says: "I know that

my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth" (Job 19:25). From this it is evident, that the resurrection of the dead can and will take place through the omnipotence of God, although this may appear to our understanding, strange, and even impossible. But what is impossible with man, is possible with God. For just as the Lord God created every thing out of nothing; so, he is also able to reanimate, and again to put together, the decayed body of man, and that with a single word; as is to be seen in the case of Lazarus (John 11:43-44). As also the Psalmist mentions (Psalm 90), when he says: "Return, ye children of men." And as we also further read in (Ezekiel 37:10). So also, Paul speaks of this matter as follows: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him" (1 Thes. 4:14). Besides this, however the apostle Paul does in some measure relieve our wonder, by comparing the resurrection of the dead with the seed in the ground; as is to be seen (1 Cor. 15:35-38). So, he also treats somewhat of the nature of the resurrection in the same chapter (v. 42-44). He says: "It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body."

Article Twenty-Fourth, Of the Last Judgment and Eternal Life; Also, Of Eternal Death

Question 143.

Now since mankind have a like ingress into the world, and a like egress out of it, will it then also be so with the resurrection of the dead?

Answer

No. For although the resurrection shall take place in like manner, yet will the consequence be unlike; as a great difference will be made in regard to the lives which men have led in this world; for while one will be banished from the presence of the Lord, and excluded from heaven, the other will be received into the favor of God: that is, into heavenly and eternal glory (Matt. 25:40-41). Further, the day here alluded to - the day of judgment - will come to pass as Malachi prophesies (Malachi 4:1-2): "The day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that

do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings." So, Daniel also says: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt (Dan. 12:2). And all this is confirmed by Christ himself (John 5:29; Matt. 25:32-33).

Question 144.

Is the time also known when this shall come to pass, or when the day of judgment shall come?

Answer

The precise time or hour of this day is not revealed or made known to us in Holy Scripture; but indeed, the certainty and nature of it. For when the disciples asked the Lord Jesus: "When shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and the end of the world?" he put them in mind of different preceding signs of war and of darkness in the sun, moon, and stars; as also of many other tribulations; but said the "end was not yet." Now since no one knows any thing of the day and hour of this day; yea, not even the angels in heaven, but the "Father only" (Matt. 24:36), who "hath put in his own power the event of this day;" how then should sinful and frail man imagine through his presumption, to have found out, by peculiar wisdom, the time of this awful event; and thereby - like Martha - "trouble himself with many things," and yet forget the "one thing needful." Therefore, Christ commands us to "watch and be ready," like those servants who wait on their master, not knowing when he "cometh" (Mark 13:35). So, Paul also testifies (1 Thes. 5:1-2), saying: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. And Christ himself says, (Matt. 24:22): "Except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. But how, or in what manner, the Day of the Lord will come, is predicted in (Matt. 24); as it was also previously by the prophets; for Joel, for instance, says: "The day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness; for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible" (Joel 2:1-

2, 11). On which day -as Peter says - “The heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein, shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness (2 Pet. 3:10-11).

Question 145.

Shall it then, on that day, be revealed, how men lived during their lifetime, and what they did; and shall they at the same time be judged thereby?

Answer

It appears clearly, that every one will receive his reward according to his works. Now since all men are, through the gospel, called, exhorted, and urged to repentance and amendment of life, but many live in a state of disobedience thereto; therefore “God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or evil” (2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, Christ also exhorts: “Take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is (Mark 13:33). “For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:35-36). For which reason Paul also writes to the Romans as follows: “Knowest thou not that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds: To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil (Rom. 2:4-9).

Question 146.

How or in what manner, shall then the judgment be held, and sentence pronounced?

Answer

This is circumstantially described by Matthew, (who received the same from the mouth of the Lord Jesus,) in the following words: "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: and before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: and he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left. Then shall the King say to them on his right hand, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' But to them on his left hand he shall say, 'depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. 25:31-41).

Question 147.

What will then properly be the great difference in the condition of the said parties, when each of them shall have gone to the place to which it will be doomed?

Answer

There has already been much said about the circumstance, that those who are disobedient to the truth - the gospel - shall be doomed to hell, to dwell with the devil and his angels; where there is prepared for them, disgrace and wrath, tribulation and anguish; yea, "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." Yea, that they "shall be cast into a furnace of fire; where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42); where the "smoke of their torment shall ascend for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:11). As is to be seen in the representation of the rich man (Luke 16:25). Yea further, that they "shall have their part in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. 21:8). "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:44-48). But where they "shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). This is indeed a dreadful end of the ungodly, who were during their lifetime disobedient to the gospel.

Question 148.

What shall, on the contrary, be the ultimate condition of the pious, when they shall have come to the place allotted them after the judgment?

Answer

For them there will be perpetual glory; yea, an over-great rejoicing, and ever sweet joy and rest. Besides being in the presence of the Great God and the Lord Jesus Christ; as also in the company of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; yea, of all the holy men of God, and surrounded by a great host of angels - thus being in everlasting joy at the "right hand of God," where "there are pleasures forever more" (Psalm 16:11). Yea, in a state of happiness, which the apostle Paul says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him" (1 Cor. 2:9). Yea, where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb of God which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Rev. 7:16-17). Thus are the pious to be with the Lord to all eternity; as the spirit of revelation says: "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev. 21:3). In this state then there will be unspeakable joy and glory, and perfect happiness without end; a happiness - to express which - all tongues on earth would have to be silent and dumb; while the saints in heaven - the elect of God - will sing with heart, soul, and spirit, the heavenly hosanna, saying. "Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen" (Rev. 7:12).

Part Second

Brief Instruction from Holy Scripture,

In Questions and Answers, For the Young.

Question 1.

The question is put to the disciple, (the person desiring to unite with the church,) what induces him to desire to unite with the communion of believers, and be baptized?

Answer

I am impelled by faith, to separate myself from the world and its sinful lusts, and to submit in obedience to my Lord, Redeemer, and Savior, for the salvation of my soul (Heb. 5:9).

Question 2.

What has induced you to this?

Answer

The will and good pleasure of God, which were proclaimed and demonstrated to me through the preaching of the holy gospel; in which were also revealed unto me the laws and commandments of Christ; which I am bound to receive and observe in true faith (Matt. 7:21; 19:17).

Question 3.

Do you then expect to be justified and saved through your good works, and the keeping of the commandments of Christ?

Answer

No. For through our good works alone we cannot merit heaven; for salvation is the unmerited grace of God, purchased for us by Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8).

Question 4.

For what purpose are then good works or the keeping of the commandments of Christ, necessary?

Answer

They are evidence of true faith in Jesus Christ; for obedience from love to God, is the light and life of faith; and without which, "faith is dead" (James 2:20).

Question 5.

Through what is man justified before God?

Answer

Through the Lord Jesus Christ alone; of whose righteousness we must become partakers through “faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6).

Question 6.

What is true faith?

Answer

It is a certain knowledge, whereby we hold everything as true that is revealed to us in Holy Scripture; and whereby we cherish a full confidence, that the pardon of our sins, righteousness, and eternal life, are granted unto us by God, through our Lord Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:5).

Question 7.

What do you believe?

Answer

I believe in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

Question 8.

How do you believe in God the Father?

Answer

I believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, that he is one, eternal, almighty, and just God, the Creator and Preserver of heaven and earth, together with all things visible and invisible (Gen. 14:17).

Question 9.

How do you believe in the Son?

Answer

I believe that he is Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, our Savior and Redeemer; who has been with the Father from eternity, and who, at the “fulness of time,” was sent into the world; that he was conceived by the Holy Ghost; born of the blessed Virgin Mary; suffered for us under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; rose again from the dead on the third day; ascended into heaven; and sits at the right hand of God, the Almighty Father; whence he will again come to judge the living and the dead (Matt. 25:31; John 17:5; Gal. 4:4).

Question 10.

How do you believe in the Holy Ghost?

Answer

I believe and confess, that the Holy Ghost proceedeth from the Father and the Son, and is of a divine nature; therefore, I also believe in God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as being one true God. Besides I also confess a general Holy Christian Church, the communion of Saints, the remission of sins, the resurrection of the flesh, and thereafter eternal life (1 John 5:20; John 5:29).

Question 11.

What do you confess of the Christian Church, or the Congregation of the Lord?

Answer

I confess by my faith, that there is a Church of God, which the Lord Jesus purchased with his own blood; and which he “sanctified and cleansed with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church” (Eph. 5:26-27).

Question 12.

In what does the Church of God consist?

Answer

In a number of persons, who, through faith in Jesus Christ, have withdrawn from a sinful world, and submitted in obedience to the gospel, not to live any more to themselves, but to Christ, in true humility; who also “give diligence” to exercise Christian virtues, by observing God’s holy ordinances. Such are members of the body of Christ, and heirs of eternal life (2 Pet. 1:11).

Question 13.

How, and through what, is the Church of God upheld?

Answer

Through the preaching of the holy gospel, and the instruction of the Holy Ghost; and for the purpose of carrying on and maintaining which, teachers and ministers are elected by the church (Eph. 4:11).

Question 14.

Who has given power to the church to choose teachers?

Answer

I confess, that as the apostles “were accustomed” to do; so, has God also given power to his church to do; namely, to elect teachers and ministers, that the “body of Christ may be edified” and preserved.

Wherefore the election of such teachers and ministers also takes place according to the example which the apostles were accustomed to observe in such matters (Eph. 4:12; Acts 1:15-26).

Question 15.

Whence comes the ordinance of the service to the poor?

Answer

Of this service we have an example in the Acts of the Apostles; who, when the “number of the disciples was multiplied,” called together the multitude, and caused to be “appointed from among them, seven men,” who took charge of such “business,” which example is still observed; so that that which is contributed by Christian hearts, is properly applied to the relief of the necessities of the poor members of the church (Acts 6:1; Eph. 4:28).

Question 16.

How, and through what means, are the members of the body of Christ incorporated into the church?

Answer

Through the ordinance of Christian baptism, on confession of their faith, and repentance of their past sins; whereupon they are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (Matt. 28:19).

Question 17.

What is baptism properly?

Answer

I confess, that it is an external ordinance of Christ, a sign of a spiritual birth from God, a “putting on of Christ,” and an incorporation into his church; an evidence that we have established a covenant with Christ (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

Question 18.

Of what use is baptism?

Answer

It represents to true believers the washing away of the impurity of their souls, through the blood of Christ, namely, the pardon of their sins; whereupon they console themselves with the hope of eternal salvation, through Jesus Christ, whom they have “put on” in baptism (Gal. 3:27).

Question 19.

To what are the members of the church of Christ, bound by baptism?

Answer

To the act of suffering their past sins to be buried into Christ's death by baptism, and of binding themselves to Christ in a new life and conversation - a life of obedience - in order that they may follow his will, and do what he has commanded them to do (Matt. 28:20).

Question 20.

What is the Lord's Supper?

Answer

I confess that it is an external ceremony and institution of Christ, administered to believers in the form of bread and wine; in the partaking of which, the death and sufferings of Christ are to be declared, and observed to his memory (1 Cor. 11:26).

Question 21.

What purpose does the observance of the Sacrament subserve?

Answer

It is thereby represented to us, how Christ's holy body was sacrificed on the cross, and his precious blood shed, for us - for the pardon of our sins (1 John 1:7).

Question 22.

What is the use of the observance of the Sacrament?

Answer

We thereby bear witness to our simple obedience to Christ, our Savior and Redeemer; which has the promise of eternal salvation. Further, it secures unto us, through faith, the communion of the body and blood of Christ, and comforts us with the benefit of his death; that is, the assurance of the pardon of our sins (Cor. 10:16; Heb. 5:9).

Question 23.

Is marriage also an institution of God?

Answer

Yes. For it is instituted by God himself, and confirmed in the case of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden (Gen. 1:27-28).

Question 24.

For what purpose is marriage instituted?

Answer

For the purpose of increasing the human race; so that the earth may thereby be peopled with inhabitants; as also, that fornication may be avoided. Therefore “every man” is to “have his own wife,” and “every woman her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2).

Question 25.

How must such marriage be begun, so that it does not clash with the institution?

Answer

Persons who are not too nearly related by consanguinity, may, after diligent prayer to God, enter into this state, and endeavor to live therein, in a Christian manner, to the end of their days; provided that they - as members of the Christian Church - enter into marriage only with members of the church (Lev. 18:6-17; 1 Cor. 7:39, 9:5).

Question 26.

Is a member of the church not at all allowed to enter into matrimony with a person who is not agreed with him in faith and doctrine?

Answer

No, for this is contrary to the marriage institution; and he who thus enters into matrimony, acts contrary to the law of God, and the doctrine of the apostles (Deut. 7:3-4; Judges 3:6-7; 1 Cor. 1:10, 7:39; Phil. 2:1-2).

Question 27.

Can also a lawful marriage, for any cause, be divorced?

Answer

No, for the persons united by such marriage are so closely bound to each other, that they can in no wise separate, except in case of “fornication” (Matt. 19:9).

Question 28.

What do you confess in regard to the power of civil government?

Answer

I confess, from the testimony of Holy Scripture, that kings and governments are instituted by God, for the welfare and common interest of the countries over which they rule; and that he who resists such authorities, “resists the ordinance of God” (Rom. 13:1). Wherefore we are under obligation to fear and honor government, and obey the same in all

things that do not militate against the word of God. So, we are also commanded to pray for the same (1 Tim. 1:2).

Question 29.

Is it allowed to swear an oath?

Answer

No, for although this was allowed to the fathers of the Old Testament, yet has our Lord and institutor of the New Testament, Christ Jesus, expressly forbidden it (Matt. 5:33-37); which is confirmed by the apostle James, when he says: "Above all things, my brethren, swear not; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (James 5:12).

Question 30.

Is it allowed to take revenge?

Answer

No; although there was liberty to do so under the Old Testament Dispensation. But now that it is totally forbidden by Christ and his apostles, we must not lust after it, but in meekness do good unto our neighbor; yea, also, to our enemies (Matt. 5:38-39; Rom. 12:19-21).

Question 31.

If a member of the church fall into some sin, or misdeed, what is to be done in such case?

Answer

I confess by virtue of the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, that reproof and discipline must be fostered and maintained amongst believers; so that the headstrong, as well as such as have committed gross sins and works of the flesh - whereby they have separated themselves from God - may not be suffered in the communion of believers, but for their own amendment, be "rebuked before all, that others also may fear" (Matt. 18:15-18; Isaiah 59:2; 1 Tim. 5:20).

Question 32.

How must we demean ourselves towards such as are thus separated from the church?

Answer

According to the doctrine of the apostles, the true members of the church of Christ are to withdraw from such reprov'd and impenitent

offenders, and have no spiritual communion with them, except by chance or occasion, when they may be exhorted in love, compassion, and Christian discretion, again to rise from their fallen state, and return to the church (Rom. 16:17; Tit. 3:10).

Question 33.

How long is the avoiding of such offenders to be observed?

Answer

Until they return again, give evidence of repentance, - of sorrow for their sins, - and earnestly desire, again to be admitted into the communion of the church. In such case they are, after solemn prayer to God, again received and admitted (2 Cor. 2:6-7).

Question 34.

What do you believe concerning the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the dead?

Answer

I believe that Christ, our Head, Lord, and Savior, will - just as he visibly ascended to heaven - again appear from thence in great power and glory, "with a shout, and with the trump of God" (1 Thes. 4:16). "For the hour is coming, in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:28-29). "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10).

Question 35.

Now as this confession agrees with the doctrine of Christ and his apostles, the question is finally put to the disciple: Whether he is inclined from his whole heart, to submit himself to the will of his Redeemer and Savior, Jesus Christ - to deny himself, together with all sinful lusts - and to strive by the grace of God, in true faith and heart-felt humility - to lead a pious and godly life and holy conversation, according to the commandments of God, as long as he lives?

Answer

Yes. To which are heartily wished God's grace and rich blessings, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to salvation. To whom be honor and

praise for ever and ever. Amen.