

GENEVAN CATECHISMS

by John Calvin

Calvin's catechisms for the instruction of the Reformed church in Geneva, teaching the fundamentals of Christian doctrine through questions and answers. These catechisms cover the Creed, the Law, Prayer, and the Sacraments.

13 Chapters

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1541 - (Part 1) - Faith

The Geneva Catechism (1541)

Calvin introduces his catechism, writing, "It has always been a matter which the Church has held in singular commendation, to see that little children should be instructed in Christian doctrine. That this might be done, not only were schools opened in early times, and people enjoined to teach their families well, but it was also a public practice, to examine children in the churches on articles of faith common to all Christians. That this might be carried out in order, a formulary was used which was called a Catechism. ... What we set before you, therefore, is nothing else than the use of things which from ancient times were observed among Christians, and which has never been neglected except when the Church has been wholly corrupted."

Catechism Dialogue between the Minister and the child by John Calvin

I. Faith 1. Minister. What is the chief end of human life?

Child. To know God.

2. Why do you say that?

Because He created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us. And it is indeed right that our life, of which He Himself is the beginning, should be devoted to His glory.

3. What is the sovereign good of man? The same thing.

4. Why do you hold that to be the sovereign good?

Because without it our condition is more miserable than that of brute-beasts.

5. Hence, then, we see that nothing worse can happen to a man than to live without God.

It is Song of Solomon 6:1-13. What is the true and right knowledge of God? When we know Him in order that we may honour Him.

7. How do we honour Him aright?

We put our reliance on Him, by serving Him in obedience to His will, by calling upon Him in all our need, seeking salvation and every good thing in Him, and acknowledging with heart and mouth that all our good proceeds from Him.

8. To consider these things in order, and explain them more fully---what is the first point? To rely upon God.

9. How can we do that?

First by knowing Him as almighty and perfectly good.

10. Is this enough?

No.

11. Why?

Because we are unworthy that He should show His power in helping us, or employ His goodness toward us.

12. What more then is required? That we be certain that He loves us, and desires to be our Father, and Saviour.

13. How do we know that? By His Word, in which He declares His mercy to us in Christ, and assures us of His love toward us.

14. Then the foundation for true reliance upon God is to know Him in Jesus Christ [John 17:3]? That is true.

15. What then briefly is the substance of this knowledge?

It is contained in the Confession of Faith used by all Christians. It is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, because it is a summary of the true faith which has always been held in Christ's Church, and was derived from the pure doctrine of the Apostles.

16. Recite it.

17. In order to expound this confession in detail, into how many parts do we divide it?

Into four principal parts.

18. What are they? The first is about God the Father; the second about His Son Jesus Christ, which also includes the whole history of our redemption; the third is about the Holy Spirit; the fourth is about the Church, and the gracious gifts of God conferred on her.

19. Since there is but one God, why do you mention the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three?

Because in the one essence of God, we have to look on the Father as the beginning and origin, and the first cause of all things; then the Son, who is Eternal Wisdom; and the Holy Spirit who is His virtue and power shed abroad over all creatures, but still perpetually resident in Himself.

20. You mean then that there is no objection to our understanding that these three persons are distinctly in one Godhead, that therefore God is not therefore divided?

Just Song of Solomon 21. Now repeat the first part.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

22. Why do you call Him Father?

It is with reference to Christ who is His eternal Word, begotten of Him before time, and being sent into this world was demonstrated and declared to be His Son. But since God is the Father of Jesus Christ, it follows that He is our Father also.

23. In what sense do you mean that He is Almighty? That does not mean that He has a power which He does not exercise, but that He disposes all things by His Providence, governs the world by His will, ruling all as it seems good to Him.

24. You mean that the power of God is not idle, but consider rather that His hand is always engaged in working, so that nothing is done except through Him, with His permission and His decree.

It is Song of Solomon 25. Why do you add that He is Creator of heaven and earth?

Because He has manifested Himself to us by works [Psalms 104:1-35; Romans 1:20] we ought to seek Him in them. Our mind cannot comprehend His essence. But the world is for us like a mirror in which we may contemplate Him in so far as it is expedient for us to know Him.

26. Do you not understand by "heaven and earth" all other creatures?

Yes indeed; under these two words all are included, because they are all heavenly and earthly.

27. But why do you call God a Creator only, seeing that it is much more to uphold and preserve creatures in their state, than to have once created them? This term does not signify that God brought His works into being at a single stroke, and then left them without a care for them. We ought rather to understand, that as the world was made by God in the beginning, so now it is preserved by Him in its estate, so that the heavens, the earth and all creatures do not continue in their being apart from this power. Besides, seeing that He holds all things in His hand, it follows that the government and lordship over them belongs to Him. Therefore, in that He is Creator of heaven and earth, it is His to rule the whole order of nature by His goodness and power and wisdom. It is He who sends rain and drought, hail, tempest and fair weather, fruitfulness and barrenness, health and sickness. In short, all things are under His command, to serve Him as it seems good to Him.

28. But what about wicked men and devils? Are they also subject to Him?

Although He does not guide them by His Holy Spirit, nevertheless He curbs them by His power, so that they cannot budge unless He permits them. He even constrains them to execute His will, although it is against their own intention and purpose.

29. What good do you derive from the knowledge of this fact?

Very Much. It would go ill with us if devils and wicked men had power to do anything in spite of the will of God. Moreover we could never be at rest in our minds if we were exposed to them in danger, but when we know that they are curbed by the will of God, so that they can do nothing without His permission, then we may rest and breathe again, for God has promised to protect and defend us.

30. Let us now come to the second part.

"And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord", etc.

31. What briefly does it comprehend? That we acknowledge the Son of God as our Saviour, and the means by which He has redeemed us from death, and acquired salvation.

32. What is the meaning of the name Jesus which you give to Him?

It means Saviour, and was given to Him by the angel at the command of God (Matthew 1:21).

33. Is this of more importance than if men had given it?

Oh, yes. For since God wills that He be called so, He must be so in truth.

34. What, next, is meant by the name of Christ? By this title His office is still better expressed---for it signifies that He was appointed by the Father to be ordained King, Priest, and Prophet.

35. How do you know that?

Because according to the Scripture, anointing is used for these three things. Also, because they are attributed to Him many times.

36. But with what kind of oil was He anointed? Not with visible oil as was used for ancient kings, priests, and prophets, but this anointing was by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is the reality signified by that outward anointing made in time past (Isaiah 61:1, Psalms 45:7).

37. But what is this Kingdom of which you speak?

It is spiritual, and consists in the Word and Spirit of God, and includes righteousness and life.

38. What of the priesthood?

It is the office and prerogative of presenting Himself before God to obtain grace and favour, and appease His wrath in offering a sacrifice which is acceptable to Him.

39. In what sense do you call Christ a Prophet?

Because on coming down into the world (Isaiah 7:14) He was the sovereign messenger and ambassador of God His Father, to give full exposition of God's will toward the world and so put an end to all prophecies and revelations (Hebrews 1:2).

. But do you derive any benefit from this?

All this is for our good. For Jesus Christ has received all these gifts in order that He may communicate them to us, and that all of us may receive out of His fullness.

41. Expound this to me more fully.

He received the Holy Spirit in full perfection with all His graces, that He may lavish them upon us and distribute them, each according to the measure and portion which the Father knows to be expedient (Ephesians 4:7). Thus we may draw from Him as from a fountain all the spiritual blessings we possess.

42. What does His Kingdom minister to us? By it, we are set at liberty in our conscience and are filled with His spiritual riches in order to live in righteousness and holiness, and we are also armed with power to overcome the devil, the flesh, and the world---the enemies of our souls.

43. What about His priesthood?

First, by means of it He is the Mediator who reconciles us to God His Father; and secondly, through Him we have access to present ourselves to God, and offer Him ourselves in sacrifice with all that belongs to us. And in this way we are companions of His priesthood.

44. There remains His Prophetic Office.

Since this office was given to the Lord Jesus to be the Master and Teacher of His own, its end is to bring us the true knowledge of the Father and of His Truth, so that we may be scholars in the household of God.

45. You would conclude, then, that the title of Christ includes three offices which God has given His Son, in order to communicate virtue and fruit to His faithful people? That is Song of Solomon

46. Why do you call Him the only Son of God, seeing that God calls us all His children?

We are children of God not by nature, but only by adoption and by grace, in that God wills to regard us as such (Ephesians 1:5). But the Lord Jesus who was begotten of the substance of His Father, and is of one essence with Him, is rightly called the only Son of God (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:2) for there is no other who is God's Son by nature.

47. You mean to say, then, that this honour is proper to Him alone, and belongs to Him by nature, but is communicated to us through a gracious gift, in that we are His numbers. That is so. Hence in regard to this communication He is called elsewhere "the First-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15).

48. How is He "our Lord"?

Because He is appointed by the Father to have us under His government, to administer the Kingdom and the Lordship of God in heaven and on earth, and to be the Head of men and believers (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

49. What is meant by what follows?

It declares how the Son of God was anointed by the Father to be our Saviour. That is to say, He assumed human flesh, and accomplished all things necessary to our salvation, as enunciated here.

50. What do you mean by the two clauses, "Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"? That He was formed in womb of the Virgin Mary, of her proper substance, to be the seed of David, as had been foretold (Psalms 132:11), and yet that this was wrought by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, without the cooperation of a man (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35).

51. Was it then required that He should put on our very flesh?

Yes, because it was necessary that the disobedience committed by man against God should be redressed in human nature. And moreover He could not otherwise be our Mediator to reconcile us to God His Father (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:15).

52. You say that Christ had to become man, to fulfill the office of Saviour, as in our very person.

Yes, indeed. For we must recover in Him all that we lack in ourselves, and this cannot be done in any other way.

53. But why was that effected by the Holy Spirit, and not by the work of man according to the order of nature? As the seed of man is in itself corrupt, it was necessary that the power of the Holy Spirit should intervene in this conception, in order to preserve our Lord from all corruption, and to fill Him with holiness.

54. Thus we are shown that He who is to sanctify others was free from every stain, and from His mother's womb He was consecrated to God in purity from the very beginning, in order that He may not be subject to the universal corruption of the human race. So I understand it.

55. Why do you go immediately from His birth to His death, passing over the whole history of His life?

Because nothing is said here about what belongs properly to the substance of our redemption.

56. Why is it not said simply and in a word that He died while Pontius Pilate is spike of, under whom He suffered? That is not only to make us certain of the history, but is also meant to signify that His death involved condemnation.

57. How is that?

He died to suffer the punishment due to us, and thus to deliver us from it. However, because we were guilty before the judgment of God as evil-doers, in order to represent us in person He was pleased to appear before the tribunal of an earthly judge, and to be condemned by his mouth, that we might be acquitted before the throne of the celestial Judges 58. But Pilate pronounced Him innocent, and therefore did not condemn Him as if He were worthy of death (Matthew 27:24; Luke 23:14).

Both were involved. He was justified by the testimony of the judge, to show that He did not suffer for His own unworthiness but for ours and yet He was solemnly condemned by the sentence of the same judge, to show that He is truly our surety, receiving condemnation for us in order to acquit us from it.

59. That is well said, for if He had been a sinner He could not have suffered death for others; and yet in order that His condemnation might be our deliverance, He had to be reckoned among transgressors (Isaiah 53:12).

I understand Song of Solomon 60. Is there greater importance in His having been crucified than if He had been put death in another way?

Yes, as Paul also shows us when he says that He hanged on a tree to take our curse upon Himself and acquit us of it (Galatians 3:13). For that kind of death was accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23).

61. What? Is it not to dishonour the Lord Jesus, to say He was subjected to the curse, and that before God? By no means, for in taking it upon Himself He abolished it, by His power, yet in such a way that He did not cease to be blessed throughout in order that He might fill us with His blessing.

62. Explain the rest.

Since death was the curse on man as a result of sin, Jesus Christ has endured it, and in enduring it overcame it. And to show that He underwent a real death, He chose to be placed in the tomb like other men.

63. But nothing seems to redound to us from this victory, since we do not cease to die. That is no obstacle. The death of believers is nothing else than a way of entering into a better life.

64. Hence it follows that we ought no longer to dread death as if it were a fearful thing, but we should willingly follow Jesus Christ our Head and Captain, who precedes us, not in order to let us perish, but in order to save us. That is Song of Solomon 65. What is the meaning of the additional clause: "He descended into hell"? That He not only suffered natural death, which is the separation of the body from the soul, but also that His soul was pierced with amazing anguish, which St. Peter calls the pains of death (Acts 2:24).

66. Why and how did that happen to Him?

Because He presented Himself to God in order to make satisfaction in the name of sinners, it was necessary that He should suffer fearful distress of conscience, as if He had been forsaken by God, and even as if God had become hostile to Him. It was in this extremity that He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

67. Was His Father then opposed to Him?

No. But He had to be afflicted in this way in fulfillment of what had been foretold by Isaiah, that "he was smitten by the hand of God for our sins and wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24).

68. But since He is God Himself, how could He be in such dread, as if He were forsaken by God?

We must hold that it was according to His human nature that He was in that extremity: and that in order to allow this, His Deity held itself back a little, as if concealed, that is, did not show its power.

69. How is it possible that Jesus Christ, who is the salvation of the world, should have been under such damnation?

He was not to remain under it. For though He experienced the horror we have spoken of, He was by no means oppressed by it. On the contrary, He battled with the power of hell, to break and destroy it.

70. Thus we see the difference between the torment which He suffered and that which sinners experience when God punishes them in His wrath. For what He suffered for a time in Himself is perpetual in the others, and what was only a needle to sting Him is to them a sword to deliver a mortal wound.

It is so, for Jesus Christ, even in the midst of such distress, did not cease to hope in God. But sinners whom God condemns rush into despair, defy, and even blaspheme Him.

71. May we not gather from this what fruit we receive from the death of Jesus Christ?

Yes, indeed. And, first, we see that it is a sacrifice by which He has made satisfaction for us before the judgment of God, and so has appeased the wrath of God and reconciled us to Him. Secondly,

that His blood is the laver by which our souls are cleansed from all stains. Finally, that by this death our sins are effaced, so as never to be remembered before God, and thus the debt which was against us is abolished.

72. Do we not have any other benefit from it?

Yes, we do. If we are true members of Christ, our old man is crucified, our flesh is mortified, so that evil desires no longer reign in us.

73. Expound the next article. | This is: "On the third day He rose again from the dead." By this He declared Himself the conqueror of death and sin, for by His resurrection He swallowed up death, broke the fetters of the devil, and destroyed all his powers (1 Peter 3:22).

74. In how many ways does this resurrection benefit us?

First, by it righteousness was fully acquired for us. Secondly, it is also a sure pledge to us that we shall rise again one day in immortal glory (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Thirdly, if we truly participate in His resurrection, even now we are raised in newness of life, to serve God and to live a holy life according to His pleasure (Romans 6:4).

75. Continue.

"He ascended into heaven."

76. Did He ascend in such a way that He is no longer on earth?

Yes. For after He had performed all that He was enjoined by the Father, and was required for our salvation, there was no need for Him to remain on earth.

77. What benefit do we obtain from this ascension? The benefit is twofold. For inasmuch as Jesus Christ entered heaven in our name, as He had descended for our sake, He has given us an entry, and assured us that the door, previously shut because of sin, is now open for us (Romans 6:8-11). Secondly, He appears before the face of the Father as our Intercessor and Advocate (Hebrews 7:25).

78. But did Christ in going to heaven withdraw from us, in such a way that He has now ceased to be with us?

No. On the contrary, He has promised that He will be with us to the end (Matthew 28:20).

79. Is it in bodily presence that He remains with us?

No, for it is one thing to speak of His body which was taken up into heaven, and another to speak of His power, which is spread abroad everywhere (Luke 24:51; Acts 2:33).

80. How do you understand that He "sitteth on the right hand of the Father"?

It means that He has received the dominion of heaven and earth, so that He reigns and rules over all (Matthew 28:18).

81. But what is meant by "right hand", and by "sitteth"?

It is a similitude taken from earthly princes, who are wont to place on their right hand those whom they make their lieutenants to govern in their name.

82. You do not mean anything more than Paul when he says that Christ had been appointed Head of the Church, and raised above all principality, has secured a Name which is above every name (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Php 2:9). That is Song of Solomon 83. Continue.

"From thence He will come to judge the quick and the dead." That is to say, He will appear again from heaven in judgment, as He was seen to ascend (Acts 1:11).

84. As the judgment is not to be before the end of the world, how do you say that some men will then be alive, and thus will be dead, seeing it is appointed to all men once to die? (Hebrews 9:27-28).

Paul answers this question when he says, that those who then survive will suddenly be changed so that their corruption will be abolished, and their bodies will put on incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

85. You understand then that this change will be for them like a death, for it will abolish their first nature, and raise them up in a new state. That is it.

86. Does the fact that Christ is to come gain to judge the world bring us any consolation?

Yes, indeed. For we are certain that He will appear only for our salvation.

87. We should not then fear the last judgment, and have a horror of it?

No, since we are not to come before any other judge than He who is our Advocate, and who has taken our cause in hand to defend us.

88. Let us come now to the third part. This is faith in the Holy Spirit.

89. What do we gain by it? The knowledge that as God has redeemed and saved us by Jesus Christ, He will also make us partakers of this redemption and salvation, through His Holy Spirit.

90. How? As the blood of Christ is our cleansing, the Holy Spirit must sprinkle our consciences with it that they may be cleansed (1 Peter 1:19).

91. This requires a clearer explanation.

I mean that the Holy Spirit, while He dwells in our hearts, makes us feel the virtue of our Lord Jesus (Romans 5:5). For He enlightens us to know His benefits; He seals and imprints them in our souls, and makes room for them in us (Ephesians 1:13). He regenerates us and makes us new creatures, so that through Him we receive all the blessings and gifts which are offered to us in Jesus Christ.

92. What follows? The fourth part, where it is said that we believe in the Catholic Church.

93. What is the Catholic Church? The community of the faithful which God has ordained and elected to eternal life.

94. Is it necessary to believe this article?

Yes, indeed, unless we want to make the death of Christ of none effect, and all that has already been said. The fruit that proceeds from it is the Church.

95. You mean then that up to this point we have spoken of the cause and foundation of salvation, how God has received us in love through the mediation of Jesus, and has confirmed this grace in us through His Holy Spirit. But now the effect and fulfillment of all this is explained in order to give us greater certainty.

It is Song of Solomon 96. In what sense do you call the Church holy?

All whom God has chosen He justifies, and reforms to holiness and innocence, that His glory may be reflected in them (Romans 8:30). And so Jesus Christ sanctified the Church which He redeemed, that it might be glorious and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).

97. What is meant by the word Catholic or Universal?

It is meant to signify, that there is only one Head of the faithful, so they must all be united in one body, so that there are not several churches but one only, which is extended throughout the whole world (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12 and 1 Corinthians 12:27).

98. And what is the meaning of what follows concerning the communion of saints? That is added to express more clearly the unity which exists among the members of the Church. Moreover by this we are given to understand, that all the benefits that the Lord gives to the Church, are for the good and salvation of every Church, because they all have communion together.

99. But is this holiness which you attribute to the Church already perfect? Not as long as she battles in this world, for elements of imperfection always remain and will never be entirely removed, until she is united completely to Jesus Christ her Head, by whom she is sanctified.

100. Can this Church be known in any other way than by believing in her?

There is indeed the visible Church of God, for the recognition of which He has certain signs, but here we speak properly of the fellowship of those whom He has elected to salvation which cannot be seen plainly by the eye.

101. What comes next?

I believe in "the forgiveness of sins".

102. What do you understand by this word "forgiveness"? That God by His pure goodness forgives and pardons the sins of believers, so that they are not brought to account before His judgment, in order to be punished.

103. Hence it follows that it is not at all through our own satisfaction that we desire to have God's pardon? That is true; for the Lord Jesus has made payment and born the punishment. We on our part could not make any recompense to God, but may only receive pardon for all our misdeeds through the pure generosity of God.

104. Why do you insert this article after the Church?

Because no man obtains pardon for his sins without being previously incorporated into the people of God, persevering in unity and communion with the Body of Christ in such a way as to be a true member of the Church.

105. And so outside the Church there is nothing but damnation and death?

Certainly, for all those who separate themselves from the community of the faithful to form a sect on its own, have no hope of salvation so long as they are in schism.

106. What follows?

I believe in "the resurrection of the flesh and the life everlasting".

107. Why is this article inserted? To show us that our happiness is not situated on the earth. This serves a two-fold end. We are to learn to pass through this world as though it were a foreign country, treating lightly all earthly things and declining to set our hearts on them. Secondly, we are not to lose courage, no matter how much we fail to perceive as yet the fruit of the grace which the Lord has wrought for us in Jesus Christ, but wait patiently until the time of Revelation 108. How will this resurrection take place?

Those who were formerly dead will resume their bodies, but with another quality; that is, they will no longer be subject to death or corruption, even although their substance will remain the same. Those who will survive God will miraculously raise up through a sudden change, as it is said (1 Corinthians 15:52).

109. Will this resurrection not be common to the evil and the good?

Yes indeed, but not in the same way. Some will rise to salvation and joy, others to condemnation and death (John 5:29; Matthew 25:46).

110. Why then is eternal life only spoken of here, and hell not at all?

Because nothing is set down in this summary that does not tend to the consolation of faithful consciences. It relates to us only the benefits which God performs for His servants. Accordingly no mention is made of the wicked, who are excluded from His Kingdom.

111. Since we have the foundation on which faith is laid, we should be quite able to gather from it what true faith is.

Yes, indeed, It is a sure and steadfast knowledge of the love of God toward us, according as He declares in His gospel that He is our Father and Saviour (through the mediation of Jesus Christ).

112. Can we have this by ourselves, or does it come from God?

Scripture teaches that it is the singular gift of the Holy Spirit, and experience also demonstrates it.

113. How so? Our mind is too weak to comprehend the spiritual wisdom of God which is revealed to us by faith, and our hearts are too prone either to defiance or to a perverse confidence in ourselves or creaturely things. But the Holy Spirit enlightens us to make us capable of understanding what would otherwise be incomprehensible to us, and fortifies us in certitude, sealing and imprinting the promises of salvation on our hearts.

114. What good comes to us from this faith, when we have it?

It justifies us before God, and makes us obtain eternal life.

115. How so? Is not man justified by good works in a holy life and in conformity to God?

If any one be found so perfect, he might well be deemed righteous, but since we are all poor sinners, we must look elsewhere for a worthiness in which to make answer before the judgment of God.

116. But are all our works so reprobate that they cannot merit grace before God?

First, all that we do of ourselves, by our own nature, is vicious, and therefore cannot please God. He condemns them all.

117. You say then that before God has received us in His grace, we can nothing but sin, just as a bad tree cannot but produce bad fruit? (Matthew 7:17).

It is so. For even if our works appear beautiful outwardly, yet they are evil, since the heart, to which God looks, is perverted.

118. Hence you conclude, that we cannot by our merits anticipate God, and so induce Him to be kind to us, but on the contrary that we do nothing but provoke Him to be against us?

Yes. And therefore I say: merely through His goodness, without any regard to our works, He is pleased to accept us freely in Jesus Christ, imputing His righteousness to us, and does not impute our sins to us (Titus 3:5-7).

119. What do you mean then by saying that a man is justified by faith? That in believing the promises of the gospel and in receiving them in true affiance of the heart, we enter into this righteousness.

120. You mean then that as God offers righteousness to us by the gospel, so it is by faith that we receive it?

Yes.

121. But after God has once received us, are the works which we do by His grace, not pleasing to Him?

Yes, they are, in that He generously accepts them, not however in virtue of their own worthiness.

122. How is that? Are they not accepted as worthy, seeing that they proceed from the Holy Spirit?

No. For there is always some weakness in them, the weakness of our flesh, through which they are defiled.

123. By what means, the, are they made acceptable?

It is by faith. That is to say, that a person is assured in his conscience that God will not examine him harshly, but covering his defects and impurities by the purity of Jesus Christ, He will regard him as perfect.

124. But can we say from this that a Christian man is justified by works after God has called him, or that through them he merits the love of God, and so obtains eternal life?

No. On the contrary, it is said that no man living will be justified in His sight (Psalms 143:2). Therefore we have to pray that He will not enter into judgment with us, nor call us to account.

125. You do not mean therefore that the good works of believers are useless?

No. For God promises to reward them fully, both in this world and in Paradise. But this comes from His gratuitous love toward us: moreover He buries all our faults, so as never to remember them.

126. But can we believe that we are justified, without doing good works? That is impossible. For to believe in Jesus Christ is to receive Him as He has given Himself to us. He promises not only to deliver us from death and restore us to favour with God His Father, through the merit of His innocence, but also to regenerate us by His Spirit, that we may be enabled to live in holiness.

127. Faith, then, not only does not make us careless of good works, but is the root from which they are produced.

It is so, and for this reason, the doctrine of the Gospel is comprehended in these two points, faith and repentance.

128. What is repentance?

Dissatisfaction with and a hatred of evil and a love good proceeding from the fear of God, and inducing us to mortify our flesh, so that we may be governed and led by the Holy Spirit, in the service of God.

129. But this second point we have mentioned concerning the Christian life.

Yes, and we said that the true and legitimate service of God is to obey His will.

130. Why?

Because He will not be served according to our own imagination, but in the way that pleases Him.

1541 - (Part 2) - The Law

II. The Law 131. What rule has He given us by which we may direct our life? His law.

132. What does it contain?

It is divided into two parts: the first contains four commandments, the other six. Thus there are ten in all.

133. Who made this division?

God Himself, who delivered it to Moses written on two table, and declared that it was reduced into ten words. (Exodus 32:15; Exodus 34:29; Deuteronomy 4:13; Deuteronomy 10:1).

134. What is the content of the first table? The Way of the true worship of God.

135. And the second?

How we are to live with our neighbours, and what we owe them.

136. Repeat the first commandment.

Hear, O Israel, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before Me (Exodus 20:2-3; Deuteronomy 5:6-7).

137. Explain the meaning. At first He makes a kind of preface for the whole law. For in calling Himself the Eternal and the Creator of the world, He claims authority to command. Then He declares that He is our God, in order that we may esteem His doctrine. For if He is our Saviour, that is good reason why we should be an obedient people to Him.

138. But is not that which He says after the deliverance from the land of Egypt, addressed particularly to the people of Israel?

Yes, it does refer to the physical deliverance of Israel, but it also applies to us all in a general way, in that He has delivered our souls from the spiritual captivity of sin, and the tyranny of the devil.

139. Why does He mention this at the beginning of His law? To remind us how much we are bound to obey His good pleasure, and what gratitude it should be on our part if we do the contrary.

140. And what does He require briefly in this first commandment? That we reserve for Him alone the honour that belongs to Him, and do not transfer it elsewhere.

141. What is the honour due Him? To adore Him alone, to call upon Him, to have our affiance in Him, and all similar things due to His majesty.

142. Why is it said "Before my face"?

Since He who sees and knows all is the judge of the secret thoughts of men, it means that He wants to be worshiped as God, not only by outward confession, but also in pure trust and affection

of heart.

143. Turn to the second Commandment.

Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any form that is in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not do honour to them.

144. Does He entirely forbid us to make any image?

No, but He forbids us to make any image with which to represent God, or to worship Him.

145. Why is it unlawful to represent God visibly?

Because there is no resemblance between Him who is eternal Spirit and incomprehensible, and corporal, dead, corruptible and visible matter (Deuteronomy 4:15; Isaiah 40:7 thew:7 thew:7; Romans 1:23; Acts 17:24-25).

146. You think then that it does dishonour to His majesty to represent Him in this way?

Yes.

147. What kind of worship is here condemned? When we come before an image intending to pray, or bow our knee before it; or to make any other sign of reverence, as if God were there showing Himself to us.

148. This does not mean that all sculpture or painting is universally forbidden, but only all images used in the service of God, or in worshiping Him in visible things, or indeed for any abuse of them in idolatry of any kind whatsoever. That is Song of Solomon 149. Now to what end shall we refer this commandment? With the first commandment, God declared that He alone, and no one beside Him, should be worshiped: so now He shows us the correct form of worship, in order that He may draw us away from all superstitions, and carnal ceremonies.

150. Let us proceed.

He adds a warning that He is the Eternal, our God, strong and jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of them who hate Him, to the third and fourth generation.

151. Why does He make mention of His might? To indicate that He has power to maintain His glory.

152. What is meant by jealousy? That He cannot allow an associate. For as He has given Himself to us out of His infinite goodness, so He would have us to be entirely His. And this is the chastity of our souls, to be consecrated and dedicated to Him. On the other hand it is a spiritual whoredom for us to turn away from Him to any superstition.

153. How is this to be understood, that He punishes the sin of the fathers on their children? To give us a greater fear of Him. He says not only that He will inflict punishment on those who offend Him, but that their offspring also will be cursed after them.

154. But is it not contrary to the justice of God to punish someone for others?

If we consider the condition of the human race, the question is answered. For by nature we are all cursed, and we cannot complain of God when He leaves us in this condition. Moreover as He manifests His grace and love toward His servants in blessing their children, so this is a testimony to His punishment of the wicked, when He leaves their seed accursed.

155. What more does He say? To incite us by gentleness, He says that He will have mercy on all who love Him and observe His commandments, to a thousand generations.

156. Does He mean that the obedience of a faithful man will save the whole of his race, even if they are still wicked?

No, but that He will extend His goodness toward the faithful to such an extent, that in love for them He will make Himself know to their children, not only to prosper them according to the flesh, but to sanctify them by His Spirit, that He might make them obedient to His will.

157. But this is not always so.

No. For as the Lord reserves for Himself the freedom to show mercy to the children of the ungodly, so on the other hand He retains the power to elect or reject in the generation of the faithful as it seems good to Him (Romans 9:15-22). However, He does this in such a way that men may acknowledge that this promise is not vain or fallacious (Romans 2:6-10).

158. Why does He mention here a thousand generations, and in regard to punishment, mention only three or four? To signify that it is His nature to exercise kindness and gentleness much more than strictness or severity, as He testifies, when He says that He is ready to show mercy, but slow to anger (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalms 103:8).

159. Let us come to the third commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

160. What does this mean?

He forbids us to abuse the name of God, not only in perjury, but also in superfluous and idle swearing.

161. Can the name of God we used lawfully in oaths?

Yes, when they are necessary, i.e., in order to uphold the truth, when it requires it, and in maintaining love and concord among us.

162. Does He reprove no other oaths, then those which are a dishonour to God? In this one case He gives us a general instruction never to utter the name of God except with fear and humility in order to glorify it. For since it is holy and honourable, we ought to guard against taking the Name of God in such a way that we appear to hold it in contempt, or give others occasion to vilify it.

163. How is this to be done? By never thinking or speaking of God and His works without honour and reverence.

164. What follows? A warning, that He will not hold him guiltless, who takes His name in vain.

165. Since elsewhere He gives a general warning that He will punish all transgressors, what is the advantage of this warning?

He wants to declare how highly He regards the glory of His name, explicitly mentioning that He will not suffer anyone to despise it, so that we may be all the more careful to hold it in reverence.

166. Let us come to the fourth commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, and hallowed it.

167. Does He order us to labour six days a week that may rest on the seventh? Not precisely, but in allowing us to labour for six days, He excepts the seventh, on which it is not right to be engaged in work.

168. Does He thus forbid us all work one day a week? This commandment has a particular reason, for the observance of rest is part of the ceremonies of the ancient Law, which was abolished at the coming of Jesus Christ.

169. Do you mean that this commandment properly belongs to the Jews, and that it was given for the time of the Old Testament?

I do, in so far as it is ceremonial.

170. How is that? Is there anything else in it besides the ceremony?

It was given for three reasons.

171. What are they? To represent spiritual rest, in aid of ecclesiastical polity, and for the relief of servants.

172. What is this spiritual rest?

It is to cease from our own works, that the Lord may work in us.

173. How is that done? By mortifying our flesh, that is, renouncing our own nature, so that God may govern us by His Spirit.

174. Is this to be done only one day a week? This is to be done continually. After we have once begun, we must continue all our life.

175. Why, then, is a certain day appointed to represent this?

It is not required that the representation should be altogether identical with the truth, but it is sufficient that there should be some resemblance.

176. But why is the seventh day appointed rather than any other day? The number seven implies perfection in Scripture. Thus it is suited to denote perpetuity. It reminds us also that our spiritual rest is only begun in this life, and will not be perfect until we depart from this world.

177. But what is meant when our Lord asserts that we must rest as He did?

After having created all His works in six days, He dedicated the seventh to the contemplation of His works. And in order better to induce us to do this, He set before us His own example. For nothing is so desirable as to be conformed to Him.

178. Must we meditate continually on the works of God, or is it sufficient on one day out of seven?

We must do it every hour, but because of our weakness, one day is specially appointed. And this is the polity of which I spoke.

179. What order, then, is to be observed on that day? That the people meet to hear the doctrine of God, to engage in common prayer, and bear witness to their faith and religion.

180. What do you mean by saying that this commandment is also given to provide for the relief of servants? To give some relaxation to those who are under the power of others. And likewise, this tends to maintain a common polity. For everyone accustoms himself to labour for the rest of the time, when there is one day for rest.

181. Let us now see how this commandment addresses itself to us. As for the ceremony, it was abolished, for we have the accomplishment of it in Christ Jesus.

182. How? Our old man is crucified, through the power of His death, and through His resurrection we are raised up to newness of life (Romans 6:6).

183. What else is there here for us? That we observe the order constituted in the Church, to hear the Word of God, to engage in public prayers and in the Sacraments, and that we do not contravene the spiritual order among the faithful.

184. And does the figure give us any further benefit?

Yes, indeed. It should lead us to the truth, namely, that being true members of Christ, we should cease from our own works, and put ourselves under His government.

185. Let us come to the second table.

It begins, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

186. What do you mean by "honour"? That children be humble and obedient toward their parents, doing them honour and reverence, helping them and being at their command, as they are bound.

187. Proceed further.

God adds a promise to the commandment, "That thy days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord thy God will give thee."

188. What does that mean? That God will give long life to those who honour their father and mother as they ought.

189. Seeing this life is full of misery, why does God promise man as a favour that he will live long?

However miserable it may be, life on earth is a blessing from God to the faithful, if only for this reason, that in it God testifies to His fatherly love in supporting them in it.

190. Does it follow conversely, that the man who dies prematurely is cursed of God? By no means. Rather does it sometimes happen that the Lord withdraws from this world more quickly those whom He loves most.

191. In so doing, how does He fulfill His promise?

All that God promises us in earthly blessings, we must receive under this condition, viz. that it is expedient for our spiritual salvation. For it would be poor indeed if that did not precedence.

192. What of those who are rebellious against their father and mother? Not only will God punish them at the last judgment, but here also God will exercise judgment on their bodies, it may be by letting them die before their time, or ignominiously, or in some other way.

193. Does He not speak expressly of the land of Canaan in this promise?

Yes, so far as the children of Israel are concerned, but the term ought to have a more general meaning for us. For seeing that the earth is the Lord's, whatever be the country we inhabit, He assigns it to us for our habitation (Psalms 24:1; Psalms 89:12; Psalms 115:16).

194. Is that all there is to the commandment?

Though father and mother only are mentioned, nevertheless all superiors are intended, as the reason is the same.

195. What is the reason? That God has given them pre-eminence; for there is no authority whether of parents, or princes, or of any others who are over us, but what God has ordained (Romans 13:1).

196. Repeat the sixth commandment.

Thou shalt not kill.

197. Does it forbid nothing but murder?

Yes, indeed. For seeing it is God who speaks, He gives us law not only for outward deeds, but primarily for the affections of our heart.

198. You mean then that there is some kind of inward murder which God forbids to us?

I do: hatred and rancour, and desire to do evil to our neighbor.

199. Is it sufficient for us not to hate or to bear ill will?

No, for in condemning hatred God signifies that He requires us to love our neighbours and seek their salvation, and all this with true affection and without simulation.

200. State the seventh commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

201. What is the essence of this? That all fornication is cursed by God, and therefore we must abstain from it if we do not want to provoke His anger against us.

202. Does it not require anything else?

We must always regard the nature of the Lawgiver, who does not halt at the outward act, but requires the affection of the heart.

203. What more then does it mean?

Since our bodies and our souls are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16, 1 Corinthians 6:15; 2 Corinthians 6:16), we must preserve them in uprightness. And so we must be chaste not only in deed, but also in desire, word and gesture. Accordingly no part of us is to be polluted with unchastity.

204. Let us come to the eighth commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

205. Is it only meant to prohibit the thefts which are punished by justice, or does it extend further?

It refers to all civil traffic and unscrupulous means of acquiring our neighbour's good, whether by violence, or fraud, or in any other kind of way that God has not allowed.

206. Is it enough to abstain from evil deeds, or is covetousness also included here?

We must ever return to this, that the Lawgiver is spiritual, that He does not speak simply of outward thefts, but all schemes, wishes and plans to enrich ourselves at the expense of our neighbour.

207. What are to do then?

We must do our duty in preserving for every man his own.

208. What is the ninth commandment?

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

209. Does it forbid perjury in court, or any kind of lying against our neighbour? In mentioning this one case it gives a general instruction, that we are not to speak evil of our neighbour falsely, nor by our slanders and lies are we do him harm in his possessions, or in his reputations.

210. But why does He expressly mention public perjury? That He may give us a greater abhorrence of this vice of evil speaking and slander, telling us that if a man accustom himself to slandering and defaming his neighbour, he will soon descend to perjury in court.

211. Does He only forbid evil speaking, or does He also include evil thinking?

Both of them, for the reason already stated. For whatever it is wrong to do before men, it is wrong to wish before God.

212. The summarize its meaning.

He enjoins us not to be inclined to misjudge and defame our neighbours, but rather to esteem them highly, as far as the truth will permit, and to preserve their good reputation in our speech.

213. Let us come to the last commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

214. Seeing that the whole law is spiritual, as you have so often said before, and the other commandments are not only to order outward acts, but also the affections of the heart, what more is added here? The Lord wished by the other commandments to rule our affections and will, but here He imposes a law also on our thoughts which though charged with covetousness and desire, yet stop short of an active intention.

215. Do you mean that the least temptation that enters into the thought of a believer is sin, even though he resists it and does not consent to it?

It is certain that all evil thoughts proceed from the infirmity of our flesh, even though we do not consent to them. But I say that this commandment speaks of concupiscence which tickles and pierces the heart of man, without bringing him to a deliberate purpose.

216. You say then that the evil affections which involve a definite act of will or resolution are already condemned, but now the Lord requires of us such integrity, that no wicked desire may enter our hearts, to solicit and incite them to evil. That is right.

217. Can we now give a short summary of the whole law?

We can, reducing it to two articles---the first of which is that we are to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength; the second that we love our neighbours as ourselves.

218. What is meant by the love of God? To love Him as God is to have and hold Him as Lord, Saviour and Father, and this requires reverence, honour, faith, and obedience along with love.

219. What does "with all our heart" signify, and "with all our soul, and with all our strength"?

Such a zeal and such a vehemence, that there is in us no desire, no will, no intention and no thought, contrary to this love.

220. What is the meaning of the second article? As we are by nature prone to love ourselves, that this affection overcomes all others, so love to our neighbour should be so predominant in our hearts, as to direct and govern us, and be the rule of all our thoughts and actions.

221. What do you understand by "our neighbours"? Not only our parents and friends, or those acquainted with us, but also those who are unknown to us, and even our enemies.

222. But what connection do they have with us? That which God has placed among all men on earth, and is so inviolable, that it cannot be abolished by the malice of any man.

223. You say, then, that if any man hate us, the blame is his own, and yet according to the order of God, he does not cease to be our neighbour, and we are to regard him as such?

It is Song of Solomon 224. Seeing that the law of God comprises the form of worshiping Him aright, should not the Christian man live according to its command?

Yes indeed. But there is some infirmity in us, so that no man acquits himself perfectly in it.

225. Why then does the Lord require a perfection which is beyond our ability?

He requires nothing which we are not bound to perform. Nevertheless, provided we take care to conform our life to what we are told here, although we are very far from reaching perfection, the Lord does not impute our faults to us.

226. Do you speak of all men in general, or of believers only?

He who is not yet regenerated by the Spirit of God cannot begin to do the least of the commandments. Moreover, even if a person could be found who had fulfilled some part of the law, he would not acquit himself before God, for our Lord pronounces that all those who have not fulfilled all the things contained in it, will be accursed (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10).

227. Hence we must conclude that the law has a two-fold office, in accordance with the fact that there are two classes of men.

Yes, in regard to unbelievers it seems but to convict and make them inexcusable before God (Romans 3:3). And this is what Paul says, that it is the ministry of death, and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:6, 2 Corinthians 3:9). In regard to believers, it has a very different use.

228. What?

First, in that it shows them that they cannot justify themselves by their works, it humbles them and disposes them to seek their salvation in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:3). Secondly, inasmuch as it requires of them much more than they are able to perform, it admonishes them to pray unto the Lord, that He may give them strength and power (Galatians 4:6), and at the same time reminds them of their perpetual guilt, that they may not presume to be proud. Thirdly it is a kind of bridle, by which they are kept in the fear of God.

229. We say then that although during this mortal life we will never fulfill the Law, such perfection is not required of us in vain, for it shows us the mark at which we ought to aim, that each of us, according to the grace God has bestowed on him, may strive continually to press toward it, and to advance day by day. That is as I understand it.

230. Do we not have perfect rule of goodness in the Law?

Yes, and therefore God demands nothing from us, but to follow it; and, on the other hand, repudiates and rejects all that a man undertakes to do beyond what it contains. The only sacrifice He requires is obedience (1 Samuel 15:22; Jeremiah 7:21-23).

231. What is the purpose then of all the admonitions, reproofs, commandments, and exhortations made both by Prophets and Apostles?

They are nothing else than declarations of the Law, leading us into obedience to it rather than turning us away from it.

232. But nothing is said about particular vocations? When it is said that we are to render to every one his due, we may well infer what the duty of each is in his own vocation. Moreover as we have already said, this is expounded for us in the whole of Scripture, for what the Lord has set down in this summary, He treats of there, and with much fuller teaching.

1541 - (Part 3) - Prayer

III. Prayer

233. Since we have spoken sufficiently of the service of God, which is the second part of His worship, let us now speak of the third part.

We said it was the invocation of God in all our needs.

234. Do you think that He alone is to be invoked?

Yes, for He requires this as the worship proper to His Deity.

235. If it is so, in what way is it legitimate for us to ask the aid of men?

There is a great difference between these two things. For we call upon God to protest that we expect no good but from Him, and that we have no refuge elsewhere, and yet we ask the assistance of men, as far as He permits, and has given them the power and means of helping us.

236. You mean that when we seek the succour of men, there is nothing to prevent our calling upon God alone, seeing that we do not put our reliance on them, and do not seek their aid except in so far as God has ordained them to be ministers and dispensers of His blessings, in order to assist us. That is true. And indeed, every benefit that comes to us we should take as coming from God Himself, as in truth it is He who sends it to us by their hands.

237. Nevertheless, should we not give thanks to men for the kindness which they do to us?

Certainly, if only for the reason that God honours them by communicating His blessings to us through their hands, for in this way He lays us under obligation to Him, and wishes us to be mindful of them.

238. Can we not conclude from this that it is wrong to invoke angels, and saints who have departed from this world?

Yes, indeed; for God has not assigned to saints this office of aiding and assisting us. And in regard to angels, though He employs their ministry for our salvation, nevertheless He does not wish us to invoke them, nor to address ourselves to them.

239. You say, then, that all that conflicts with the order instituted by the Lord, contravenes His will?

Yes, for it is a sure sign of infidelity if we are not contented with what the Lord gives to us. Moreover, if instead of having a refuge in God alone, in obedience to His command, we have recourse to them, putting something of our reliance on them, we fall into idolatry, seeing we transfer to them that which God has reserved for Himself.

240. Let us now speak of the way of prayer to God. Is it sufficient to pray with the tongue, or does prayer require also the spirit and the heart? The tongue is not always necessary, but there must be

understanding and affection.

241. How will you prove that?

Since God is Spirit, He always requires the heart, and especially in prayer, in which we enter into communication with Him, wherefore He promises to be near to those only who call upon Him in truth (Psalms 145:18). On the other hand, He curses all who pray to Him in hypocrisy, and without affection (Isaiah 29:13-14).

242. All prayers, then, made only with the mouth are vain? Not only vain, but also displeasing to God.

243. What kind of affection should we have in prayer?

First, that we feel our misery and poverty, and that this feeling should beget sorrow and anguish in us. Secondly, that we have an earnest desire to obtain grace from God. This desire will also kindle our hearts, and engender in us an ardent longing to pray.

244. Does this derive from our nature, or from the grace of God?

Here God must come to our aid, for we are too dull, but the Spirit of God helps us with groanings that cannot be uttered, and forms in our hearts the affection and zeal that God requires, as Paul says (Romans 8:26; Galatians 4:6).

245. Does this mean that we have not to incite and urge ourselves to pray? By no means. On the contrary, when we do not feel such a disposition within us we should beseech the Lord to put it into us, so as to make us capable and fit to pray as we ought.

246. You do not, however, mean that the tongue is quite useless in prayer? Not at all, for sometimes it helps the mind, sustaining and keeping it from being drawn away from God so easily. Besides, since more than all the other members it was formed to the glory of God, it is very reasonable that it should be employed by all means for this purpose. Moreover, the zeal of the heart by its own ardour and vehemence often constrains the tongue to speak quite spontaneously.

247. If so, what about prayer in an unknown tongue?

It is a mockery of God, and a perverse hypocrisy (1 Corinthians 14:14).

248. But when we pray to God, is it a venture in which we do not know whether we will succeed or not? Or ought we to be certain that our praying will be heard? The ground of our prayers should always be, that they will be received by God, and that we shall obtain what we request as far as it is expedient for us. And therefore St. Paul says that true prayer comes from faith (Romans 10:14). For if we have no reliance upon the goodness of God, it will be impossible for us to call upon Him in truth.

249. And what of those who doubt, not knowing if God hears or not? Their prayers are utterly void, since they have no promise, for He says that whatever we ask, believing, we shall receive (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24).

250. It remains to learn how and in whose name we can have the boldness to present ourselves before God, seeing that we are so unworthy in ourselves.

First we have promises on which we must rest, without considering our worthiness (Psalms 50:15; Psalms 91:3; Psalms 145:18; Isaiah 30:15; Isaiah 65:24; Jeremiah 29:12; Joel 3:5). Secondly, if we are children of God, He induces and urges us by His Holy Spirit to betake ourselves to Him familiarly, as to our Father (Matthew 9:2, Matthew 9:22; etc.). And lest we, who are poor worms of the earth, and miserable sinners, should be afraid to appear before His glorious majesty, He gives us our Lord Jesus Christ as a Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:16; 1 John 2:1), that through Him we may have access and have no doubt of finding grace.

251. Do you understand that we are to call upon God only, in the Name of Jesus Christ?

I understand so, for we have an express commandment about this. And in it we are promised that by His intercession our requests will be heard (John 14:13).

252. It is not, then, temerity or foolish presumption on our part, if we presume to address God personally, seeing that we have Jesus Christ for our Advocate, and if we set Him before us, that God may for His sake be gracious to us and accept us?

No, for we pray as it were by His mouth, since He gives us entrance and audience, and intercedes for us (Romans 8:34).

253. Let us now speak of the substance of our prayers. Can we ask for all that comes into our mind, or is there a certain rule to be observed about it?

If we followed our fantasy, our prayers would be very badly ordered. We are so ignorant that we cannot judge what it is good to ask: Moreover, all our desires are so intemperate that it is necessary that we should not give them a loose rein.

254. What is to be done, then? That God Himself should instruct us, according to what He knows to be expedient; that we do nothing but follow Him, as if He were leading us by the hand.

255. What instructions has He given?

He has given us ample instructions throughout Scripture; but that we may address ourselves the better to a definite end, He has given us a form in which He has briefly comprehended everything that is legitimate and expedient for us to pray for.

256. Repeat it. Our Lord Jesus Christ, being asked by His Disciples to teach them how to pray, answered that they should pray thus (Matthew 6:9-13; Luke 11:1-4): "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

257. To make it easier to understand, tell me how many sentences it contains.

Six, of which the first three concern the glory of God alone, without any reference to ourselves; the other three are for us, and concern our blessing and profit.

258. Are we then to ask God for anything from which no benefit redounds to us?

It is true that God, by His infinite goodness, so arranges and orders things, that nothing tends to the glory of His Name without being also salutary to us. Therefore, when His name is sanctified, He turns it to our sanctification; when His Kingdom comes, we are, in a way, sharers in it. But in desiring and asking all these things, we ought to have regard only for His glory, without thinking of ourselves, or seeking our own profit.

259. According to what you say, the first three of these requests are expedient for us, and yet they ought not to be made with any other intention than of desiring that God may be glorified.

It is so. And similarly, although the last three requests are appointed as prayers for what is expedient to us, yet even in them we ought to seek the glory of God, so that it may be the end of all our desires.

260. Let us come to the exposition. And before we go any further, why is God called our Father, rather than by some other name?

(Matthew 7:11).

262. Can we not prove from this very Name, what has been said, viz. that prayer should be grounded on the intercession of Jesus Christ?

Yes, certainly. For God does not acknowledge us as His children, except in so far as we are members of His Song of Solomon 263. Why do you not call God your God, but call Him our Father together?

Each believer may indeed call Him his own Father, but in this formula Jesus Christ instructs us to pray together, to remind us that in our prayers we are to exercise charity towards our neighbours, and not only to care for ourselves.

264. What is meant by the clause "who art in heaven"?

It is just the same as if I were to call Him exalted, mighty, incomprehensible.

265. To what end, and for what reason? That when we call upon Him, we may learn to lift our thoughts on high, and not to have any carnal or earthly thoughts of Him, not to measure Him by our apprehension, nor to subject Him to our will, but to adore His glorious Majesty in humility. It teaches us also to have more reliance on Him, since He is Governor and Master of all.

266. Now expound the first petition. The Name of God is His renown, with which He is celebrated among men. We pray then that His glory may be exalted above all, and in all things.

267. Do you think that His glory can increase or decrease? Not in itself. But this means that it may be manifested, as it ought to be, that all the works which God performs may appear glorious, as indeed they are, so that He Himself may be glorified in every way.

268. What do you understand by the Kingdom of God in the second petition?

It consists principally of two things: that He leads His own, and governs them by His Spirit, and on the other hand casts down and confounds the reprobate who refuse to subject themselves to His rule, and so makes it clear that there is no power which can resist His power.

269. In what sense do you pray that this Kingdom may come? That day by day the Lord may increase the numbers of the faithful, that day by day He may increasingly bestow His graces upon them, until He has filled them completely; moreover, that He cause His truth to shine more and more and manifest His justice, so that Satan and the powers of darkness may be put to confusion, and all iniquity be destroyed and abolished.

270. Is that not taking place today?

Yes indeed---in part, but we pray that it may continually increase and advance, until at last it comes to its perfection in the day of judgment, in which God alone will be exalted, and every creature will be humbled before His Majesty, and He will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

271. What do you mean by asking that the will of God may be done?

(Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 8:17).

277. Why do you call it yours, when you ask God to give it to you?

(Job 9:3). Thus the only refuge we may have is in His mercy.

282. How do you think that such remission is granted to us?

(Romans 7:23), but He gives us strength to resist, sustains us by His hand, takes us into His safe keeping, to defend and lead us.

290. How is this done?

(1 Peter 5:8). We are so feeble and frail that he would immediately overcome us, if God did not fortify us, that we might be victorious over him.

292. What does the word "temptation" signify?

1541 - (Part 4) - The Word and Sacraments

IV. The Word and Sacraments 296. It is time to come to the fourth part of worship we are to render to God.

We said that this consists in acknowledging with the heart and confirming with the mouth that God is the author of all good, that thereby we may glorify Him.

297. Has He given us any rule for this?

All the praises and thanksgivings contained in Scripture ought to be our rule and guide.

298. Is there nothing regarding this in the Lord's Prayer?

Yes there is, for when we pray that His name may be hallowed, we pray that He may be glorified in all His works, as indeed He is--that He may be praised for His justice when He punishes, for His mercy when He pardons, and for His faithfulness when He fulfils His promises; in short, that there is nothing in which His glory does not shine forth. This is to ascribe to Him the praise for all blessing.

299. What shall we infer from all that we have said?

What truth itself tells us, and was stated at the outset, viz. that this is eternal life to know one true God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3)--to know Him, I say, in order that we may worship Him aright, that He may be not only our Master, but also our Father and Saviour, and we be in turn His children and servants, and a people dedicated to His glory.

300. How can we attain to such a blessedness? For this end God has left us His holy Word, which is, as it wee, an entry into His heavenly Kingdom.

301. Where do you find this Word?

It is comprised for us in the Holy Scriptures.

302. How are we to use it in order to profit by it? By receiving it with the full consent of our conscience, as truth come down from heaven, submitting ourselves to it in right obedience, loving it with a true affection by having it imprinted in our hearts, we may follow it entirely and conform ourselves to it.

303. Is all this within our own power?

None of it; but God works them in us in this way by His Holy Spirit.

304. But are we not to take trouble and be diligent, and zealously strive by hearing and reading its teaching, as it is declared to us?

Yes, indeed: first each one of us in particular ought to study it: and above all, we are frequently to attend the sermons in which this Word is expounded in the Assembly of the Christians.

305. Do you mean that it is not enough for people to read it privately at home, without altogether hearing its teaching in common? That is just what I mean, while God provides the way for it.

306. Why do you say that?

Because Jesus Christ has established this order in His Church (Ephesians 4:11), and He has declared this to be the only means of edifying and preserving it. Thus we must keep ourselves to it and not be wiser than our Master.

307. Is it necessary, then, that there should be pastors?

Yes; and that we should hear them, receiving the teaching of the Lord in humility by their mouth. Therefore whoever despises them and refuses to hear them, rejects Jesus Christ, and separates himself from the fellowship of the faithful (Matthew 10:40 Luke 10:16).

308. But is it enough to have been instructed by them once, or ought he to continue to do this?

It is little to have begun, unless you go on to persevere. We must continue to be disciples of Christ right to the end. But He has ordained the ministers of the Church to teach in His Name.

309. Is there no other means than the Word by which God communicates Himself to us? To the preaching of His Word He has conjoined the Sacraments.

310. What is a Sacrament? An outward attestation of the grace of God which, by a visible sign, represents spiritual things to imprint the promises of God more firmly in our hearts, and to make us more sure of them.

311. What? Does a visible and natural sign have this power to assure the conscience?

No, not of itself, but in so far as it is ordained of God for this end.

312. Seeing it is the proper office of the Holy Spirit to seal the promises of God in our hearts, how do you attribute this to the Sacraments?

There is a great difference between the one and the other. The Spirit of God in very truth is the only One who can touch and move our hearts, enlighten our minds, and assure our consciences; so that all this ought to be judged as His own work, that praise may be ascribed to Him alone. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself makes use of the Sacraments as inferior instruments according as it seems good to Him, without in any way detracting from the power of the Holy Spirit.

313. You think, then, that the efficacy of the Sacraments does not consist in the outward element, but proceeds entirely from the Spirit of God?

Yes; for the Lord is pleased to work by these instruments which He has instituted: without detracting from His own power.

314. And what moves God to do that? For the alleviation of our weaknesses. If we were spiritual by nature, like the angels, we could behold God and His graces. But as we are bound up with our bodies, it is needful for us that God should make use of figures to represent to us spiritual and heavenly things, for otherwise we could not comprehend them. At the same time, it is expedient for us to have all our senses exercised in His Holy promises, in order to confirm us in them.

315. Since God has introduced the Sacraments to meet our need, it would be arrogance and presumption to think that we could dispense with them.

Certainly: hence he who voluntarily abstains from using them thinks that he has no need of them, condemns Jesus Christ, rejects His grace, and quenches His Holy Spirit.

316. But what assurance of grace can the Sacraments give, seeing that good and bad both receive them?

Although the unbelievers and the wicked make of none effect the grace offered them through the Sacraments, yet it does not follow that the proper nature of the Sacraments is also made of non effect.

317. How, then, and when do the Sacraments produce this effect? When we receive them in faith, seeking Jesus Christ alone and His grace in them.

318. Why do you say that we must seek Jesus Christ in them?

I mean that we are not to be taken up with the earthly sign so as to seek our salvation in it, nor are we to imagine that it has a peculiar power enclosed within it. On the contrary, we are to employ the sign as a help, to lead us directly to the Lord Jesus, that we may find in Him our salvation and all our well-being.

319. Seeing that faith is required, why do you say that they are given to confirm us in faith, to assure us of the promises of God?

It is not sufficient for faith once to be generated in us. It must be nourished and sustained, that it may grow day by day and be increased within us. To nourish, strengthen, and increase it, God gives us the Sacraments. This is what Paul indicates when he says that they are used to seal the promises of God in our hearts (Romans 4:11).

320. But is it not a sign of unbelief when the promises of God are not firm enough for us, without support?

It is a sign of the smallness and weakness of faith, and such is indeed the faith of the children of God, who do not, however, cease to be faithful, although their faith is still imperfect. As long as we live in this world some elements of unfaithfulness remain in our flesh, and therefore we must always advance and grow in faith.

321. How many Sacraments are there in the Christian Church?

There are only two Sacraments common to all which the Lord Jesus has instituted for the whole company of the faithful.

322. What are they?

Baptism and the Holy Supper.

323. What likeness and difference is there between them?

Baptism is for us a kind of entrance into the Church of God, for it testifies that instead of our being strangers to Him, God receives us as members of His family. The Supper testifies that God as a

good Father carefully feeds and refreshes the members of His household.

324. That the meaning may be more clear to us, let us treat of them separately. First, what is the meaning of Baptism?

It consists of two parts. The Lord represents to us in it, first, the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 5:26-27) and, secondly, our regeneration or spiritual renewal (Romans 6:4).

325. What resemblance has water with these things in order to represent them? The forgiveness of sins is a kind of washing, by which our souls are cleansed from their defilements, just as the stains of the body are washed away by water.

326. What about the other part? The beginning of our regeneration and its end is our becoming new creatures, through the Spirit of God. Therefore the water is poured on the head as a sign of death, but in such a way that our resurrection is also represented, for instead of being drowned in water, what happens to us is only for a moment.

327. You do not mean that the water is a washing of the soul. By no means, for that pertains to the blood of Christ alone, which was shed in order to wipe away all our stains and render us pure and unpolluted before God (1 John 1:7; 1 Peter 1:19). This is fulfilled in us when our consciences are sprinkled by the Holy Spirit. But by the Sacrament that is sealed to us.

328. Do you think that the water is only a figure to us?

It is such a figure that the reality is conjoined with it, for God does not promise us anything in vain. Accordingly it is certain that in Baptism the forgiveness of sins is offered to us and we receive it.

329. Is this grace fulfilled indiscriminately in all?

No, for some make it of no effect by their perversity. Nevertheless, the Sacrament loses nothing of its nature, although none but believers feel its efficacy.

330. From what does regeneration get its power? From the death and resurrection of Christ. His death has had this effect, that through it our old Adam is crucified, and our evil nature is, as it were, buried, so that it no longer has the strength to rule over us. And the renewal of our life, in obedience to the righteousness of God, derives from the resurrection of Christ.

331. How is this grace applied to us in Baptism? In it we are clothed with Jesus Christ, and receive His Spirit, provided that we do not make ourselves unworthy of the promises given to us in it.

332. What is the proper use of Baptism on our part?

It consists in faith and in repentance. That is, assurance that we have our spiritual purity in Christ, and in feeling within us, and declaring to our neighbours by our works, that His Spirit dwells in us to mortify our natural desires and bring us to follow the Will of God.

333. If this is required, how is it that we baptize infants?

It is not said that faith and repentance should always precede the reception of the Sacrament, but they are only required from those who are capable of them. It is sufficient, then, if infants produce and manifest the fruit of their Baptism after they come to the age of discretion.

334. Can you show that there is nothing inconsistent in this?

Circumcision was also a Sacrament of repentance, as Moses and the prophets declare (Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4); and was a Sacrament of faith, as St. Paul says (Romans 4:11-12). And yet God has not excluded little children from it.

335. But can you show that they are now admitted to Baptism for the same reason as in the case of circumcision?

Yes, for the promises which God anciently gave to His people of Israel are now extended to the whole world.

336. But does it follow from this that we are to use the sign also? That becomes evident when everything is considered. Jesus Christ has not made us partakers of His grace, which formerly had been bestowed on the people of Israel, in order to diminish it in us, or make it more obscure, but rather to manifest it and to bestow it upon us in increased abundance.

337. Do you reckon that if we denied Baptism to little infants, the grace of God would then be diminished by the coming of Christ?

Yes; for the sign of the bounty and mercy of God toward our children, which they had in ancient times, would be wanting in our case, the very sign which ministers so greatly to our consolation, and to confirm the promise already given in the Command.

338. You mean then that since God in ancient times declared Himself to be the Saviour of little infants, and wanted to have this promise sealed on their bodies by an external Sacrament, it is right that confirmation of it should not be less after the advent of Christ, since the same promise remains and indeed is more clearly attested by the Word and ratified in action.

Yes. And besides, since it is quite evident that the power and the substance of Baptism pertain to little children, to deny them the sign, which is inferior to the substance, would be to do them injury.

339. On what conditions should we baptize little children? As a sign and testimony that they are heirs of God's blessing promised to the seed of the faithful, that when they come of age they are to acknowledge the truth of their Baptism, in order to derive benefit from it.

340. Let us speak of the Supper. And, first, what is its signification? Our Lord instituted it to assure us that by the communication of His body and blood, our souls are nourished, in the hope of eternal life.

341. But why does the Lord represent His body by the bread and His blood by the wine? To signify that as it is the particular virtue of bread to nourish our bodies, to refresh and sustain us in this mortal life, so it pertains to His body to act toward our souls, i.e., in nourishing and quickening them spiritually, so His blood is our joy, our refreshing and our spiritual strength.

342. Do you mean that we must truly communicate in the body and blood of the Lord?

I understand so. But since the whole affiance of our salvation rests in the obedience which He has rendered to God, His Father, in order that it may be imputed to us as if it were ours, we must possess Him: for His blessings are not ours, unless He gives Himself to us first.

343. But did He not give Himself to us when He exposed Himself to death, to reconcile us to God His Father, and deliver us from damnation? That is true; but it is not enough for us unless we receive Him, in order that we may feel in ourselves the fruit and the efficacy of His death and passion.

344. Is not the way to receive Him by faith?

Yes. Not only in believing that He died and rose again, in order to deliver us from eternal death, and acquire life for us, but also that He dwells in us, and conjoined with us in a union as the Head with the members, that by virtue of this conjunction He may make us partakers of all His grace.

345. Does this communion take place apart from the Supper alone?

Yes, indeed, we have it through the Gospel, as St. Paul declares (1 Corinthians 1:9): in that the Lord Jesus Christ promises us in it, that we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone (Ephesians 5:30), that He is that living bread which came down from heaven to nourish our souls (John 6:51), and that we are one with Him, as He is one with the Father (John 17:21).

346. What is the blessing that we have in the Sacrament, and what more does it minister to us? This communion is more abundantly confirmed in us, ratified as it were, for although Jesus Christ is truly communicated to us both by Baptism and by the Gospel, nevertheless this only in part, and not fully.

347. What then fully do we have through the sign of the bread? That the body of the Lord Jesus which was once offered to reconcile us to God, is now given to us, to certify to us that we have part in this reconciliation.

348. What do we have in the sign of the wine? That the Lord Jesus, who once shed His blood in payment and satisfaction for our offences, gives it to us to drink, that we may have no doubt at all of receiving its fruit.

349. According to your replies, the Supper takes us back to the death and passion of Jesus Christ, that we may communicate in its virtue?

Yes, for then the unique and perpetual sacrifice was offered for our redemption. Therefore there remains for us nought but to enjoy it.

350. The Supper, then, was not instituted in order to offer up the body of Jesus the Son to the Father?

No, for this office pertains to none but Him alone, since He is the eternal Priest (Hebrews 5:5). But He commands us only to receive His body, not to offer it (Matthew 26:26).

351. Why is there a double sign? Our Lord has appointed it for the sake of our weakness, in order to teach us that He is not only food to our souls, but drink also, so that we may seek our nourishment wholly and entirely in Him, and not elsewhere.

352. Should all men equally use the second sign, that is the chalice?

Yes, this is according to the commandment of Jesus Christ, against which nothing is to be attempted.

353. Do we have in the Supper simply the testimony of the things already mentioned, or are they truly given to us in it?

See that Jesus Christ is the Truth, there can be no doubt that the promises which He made at the Supper, are actually fulfilled in it, and that what He figures in it is made true. Thus in accordance with what He promises and represents in the Sacrament, I do not doubt that He makes us partakers of His very substance, in order to unite us with Himself in one life.

354. But how can this be, when the body of Jesus Christ is in heaven, and we are pilgrims on this earth? By the incomprehensible power of His Spirit, who conjoins things separated by distance.

355. You do not think, then, either that the body is enclosed in the bread, or the blood in the chalice?

No. On the contrary, in order to have the reality of the Sacraments, we must lift up our hearts on high to heaven, where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, from whence we expect Him in our redemption, and do not seek Him in these corruptible elements.

356. You understand, then, that there are two things in this Sacrament, material bread and wine, which we see by the eye, handle by the hands, and perceive by the taste, and Jesus Christ by whom our souls are inwardly nourished?

Yes, but in such a way that we have in it also a testimony and a kind of pledge for the resurrection of our bodies, in that they are made partakers in the sign of life.

357. What is the right use of this Sacrament? That which St. Paul declares, namely that a man examine himself before he approach to it (1 Corinthians 11:28).

358. In what is he to examine himself?

Whether he is a true member of Jesus Christ.

359. By what sign can he know this?

If he has a true faith and repentance, if he loves his neighbour in true charity, and is not tainted by hatred or rancour or discord.

360. But is it necessary to have perfect faith and charity?

Both should be entire and unfeigned, but to have such a perfection, from which nothing is wanting, will not be found among men. Moreover the Supper would have been instituted in vain if no one could receive it unless he were entirely perfect.

361. Imperfection, then, does not prevent us from approaching it. On the contrary, the Supper would be of no use to us, if we were not imperfect. It is an aid and support for our weakness.

362. Do these two Sacraments not serve another end?

Yes, they do. They are also signs and marks of our profession. That is to say, by them we declare that we are of the people of God, and make confession of our Christianity.

363. How ought we to judge a man who never wishes to use it?

He could not be regarded as a Christian, for in so doing he refuses to confess himself as such, and tacitly, as it were, disavows Jesus Christ.

364. Is it sufficient to receive each once?

Baptism is only ordered to be received once, and may not lawfully be repeated. But this is not so with the Supper.

365. What is the reason for that? By Baptism God introduces and receives us into His Church. After He has received us, He signifies by the Supper that He wishes continually to nourish us.

366. To whom does it belong truly to baptize and administer the Supper? To those who are publicly charged to teach in the Church. For the preaching of the Word and the distribution of the Sacraments are things conjoined.

367. Is there any certain proof for this?

Yes, indeed. Our Lord specially charged His Apostles to baptize as well as to preach (Matthew 28:19). In regard to the Supper. He ordered all to follow His example. Moreover He performed the office of a minister in order to give it to others.

368. But ought pastors, who are appointed to dispense the Sacraments, to admit without discretion all who present themselves there? In regard to Baptism, as it is administered today only to infants, there is no need for discrimination; but in the Supper the minister ought to take heed not to give it to a man whom he recognizes to be entirely unworthy.

369. Why so?

Because it would pollute and dishonour the Sacrament.

370. But our Lord admitted Judas to the Supper, impious though he was? His iniquity was still hidden, and although our Lord knew it, yet it was not evident to all.

371. What then is to be done with hypocrites? The minister cannot exclude them as unworthy, but must wait until God has revealed their iniquity.

372. But what if he knows or has been warned that someone is unworthy? That would not be sufficient to exclude him, unless there were a legitimate investigation and decision of the Church.

373. Then there ought to be some order and polity regarding this.

Yes, if the Church is to be well ordered. Some persons must be appointed to watch out for the offences that may be committed. And they, with the authority of the Church, should refuse communion to those who are quite unfit, and to whom communion cannot be given without dishonouring God and scandalizing the faithful.

1545 - (Intro)

CATECHISM OF THE CHURCH OF GENEVA, BEING A FORM OF INSTRUCTION FOR CHILDREN THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST.

DEDICATION.

JOHN CALVIN TO THE FAITHFUL MINISTERS OF CHRIST THROUGHOUT EAST FRIESLAND, WHO PREACH THE PURE DOCTRINE OF THE GOSPEL.

Seeing it becomes us to endeavor by all means that unity of faith, which is so highly commended by Paul, shine forth among us, to this end chiefly ought the formal profession of faith which accompanies our common baptism to have reference. Hence it were to be wished, not only that a perpetual consent in the doctrine of piety should appear among all, but also that one Catechism were common to all the Churches. But as, from many causes, it will scarcely ever obtain otherwise than that each Church shall have its own Catechism, we should not strive too keenly to prevent this; provided, however, that the variety in the mode of teaching is such, that we are all directed to one Christ, in whose truth being united together, we may grow up into one body and one spirit, and with the same mouth also proclaim whatever belongs to the sum of faith. Catechists not intent on this end, besides fatally injuring the Church, by sowing the materials of dissension in religion, also introduce an impious profanation of baptism. For where can any longer be the utility of baptism unless this remain as its foundation - that we all agree in one faith?

Wherefore, those who publish Catechisms ought to be the more carefully on their guard, by producing anything rashly, they may not for the present only, but in regard to posterity also, do grievous harm to piety, and inflict a deadly wound on the Church. This much I wished to premise, as a declaration to my readers, that I myself too, as became me, have made it my anxious care not to deliver any thing in this Catechism of mine that is not agreeable to the doctrine received among all the pious. This declaration will not be found vain by those who will read with candor and sound judgment. I trust I have succeeded at least so far that my labor, though it should not satisfy, will be acceptable to all good men, as being in their opinion useful. In writing it in Latin, though some perhaps will not approve of the design, have been influenced by many reasons, all of which it is of no use to detail at present. I shall only select such as seem to me sufficient to obviate censure.

First, In this confused and divided state of Christendom, I judge it useful that there should be public testimonies, whereby churches which, though widely separated by space, agree in the doctrine of Christ, may mutually recognize each other. For besides that this tends not a little to mutual confirmation, what is more to be desired than that mutual congratulations should pass between them, and that they should devoutly commend each other to the Lord? With this view, bishops were wont in old time, when as yet consent in faith existed and flourished among all, to send Synodal Epistles beyond sea, by which, as a kind of badges, they might maintain sacred communion among the churches. How much more necessary is it now, in this fearful devastation of the Christian world, that the few churches which duly worship God, and they too scattered and

hedged round on all sides by the profane synagogues of Antichrist, should mutually give and receive this token of holy union, that they may thereby be incited to that fraternal embrace of which I have spoken? But if this is so necessary in the present day, what shall our feelings be concerning posterity, about which I am so anxious, that I scarcely dare to think? Unless God miraculously send help from heaven, I cannot avoid seeing that the world is threatened with the extremity of barbarism. I wish our children may not shortly feel, that this has been rather a true prophecy than a conjecture. The more, therefore, must we labor to gather together, by our writings, whatever remains of the Church shall continue, or even emerge, after our death. Writings of a different class will show what were our views on all subjects in religion, but the agreement which our churches had in doctrine cannot be seen with clearer evidence than from catechisms. For therein will appear, not only what one man or other once taught, but with what rudiments learned and unlearned alike amongst us, were constantly imbued from childhood, all the faithful holding them as their formal symbol of Christian communion. This was indeed my principal reason. for publishing this Catechism. A second reason, which had no little weight with me, was, because I heard that it was desired by very many who hoped it would not be unworthy of perusal. Whether they are right or wrong in so judging is not mine to decide, but it became me to yield to their wish. Nay, necessity was almost laid upon me, and I could not with impunity decline it. For having seven years before published a brief summary of religion, under the name of a Catechism, I feared that if I did not bring forward this one, I should cause (a thing I wished not) that the former should on the other hand be excluded. Therefore if I wished to consult the public good, it behoved me to take care that this one which I preferred should occupy the ground.

Besides, I deem it of good example to testify to the world, that we who aim at the restitution of the Church, are everywhere faithfully exerting ourselves, in order that, at least, the use of the Catechism which was abolished some centuries ago under the Papacy, may now resume its lost rights. For neither can this holy custom be sufficiently commended for its utility, nor can the :Papists be sufficiently condemned for the flagrant corruption, by which they not only set it aside, by converting it into puerile trifles, but also basely abuse it to purposes of impure and impious superstition. That spurious Confirmation, which they have substituted in its stead, they deck out like a harlot, with great splendor of ceremonies, and gorgeous shows without number; nay, in their wish to adorn it, they speak of it in terms of execrable blasphemy, when they give out that it is a sacrament of greater dignity than baptism, and call those only half Christians who have not been besmeared with their oil. Meanwhile, the whole proceeding consists of nothing but theatrical gesticulations, or rather the wanton sporting of apes, without any skill in imitation. To you, my very dear brethren in the Lord, I have chosen to inscribe this work, because some of your body, besides informing me that you love me, and that the most of you take delight in my writings, also expressly requested me by letter to undertake this labor for their sake. Independently of this, it would have been reason sufficient, that what I learned of you long ago, from the statement of grave and pious men, had bound me to you with my whole soul. I now ask what I am confident you will of your own accord do - have the goodness to consult for the utility of this token of my goodwill towards you! Farewell May the Lord increase you more and more in the spirit of wisdom, prudence, zeal, and fortitude, to the edification of his Church.

GENEVA, 2D DECEMBER, 1545. TO THE READER.

It has ever been the practice of the Church, and one carefully attended to, to see that children should be duly instructed in the Christian religion. That this might be done more conveniently, not only were schools opened in old time, and individuals enjoined properly to teach their families, but it was a received public custom and practice, to question children in the churches on each of the heads, which should be common and well known to all Christians. To secure this being done in order, there was written out a formula, which was called a Catechism or Institute. Thereafter the devil miserably rending the Church of God, and bringing upon it fearful ruin, (of which the marks are still too visible in the greater part of the world,) overthrew this sacred policy, and left nothing behind but certain trifles, which only beget superstition, without any fruit of edification. Of this description is that confirmation, as they call it, full of gesticulations which, worse than ridiculous, are fitted only for apes, and have no foundation to rest upon. What we now bring forward, therefore, is nothing else than the use of things which from ancient times were observed by Christians, and the true worshippers of God, and which never were laid aside until the Church was wholly corrupted.

1545 - (Part 1) - Faith

CATECHISM OF THE CHURCH OF GENEVA. OF FAITH What is the chief end of human life? To know God by whom men were created.

What reason have you for saying so?

Because he created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us. And it is indeed right that our life, of which himself is the beginning, should be devoted to his glory.

What is the highest good of man? The very same thing.

Why do you hold that to be the highest good?

Because without it our condition is worse than that of the brutes.

Hence, then, we clearly see that nothing worse can happen to a man than not to live to God.

It is so.

What is the true and right knowledge of God? When he is so known that due honor is paid to him.

What is the method, of honoring him duly? To place our whole confidence in him; to study to serve him during our whole life by obeying his will; to call upon him in all our necessities, seeking salvation and every good thing that can be desired in him; lastly, to acknowledge him both with heart and lips, as the sole Author of all blessings. To consider these points in their order, and explain them more fully - What is the first head in this division of yours? To place our whole confidence in God.

How shall we do so? When we know him to be Almighty and perfectly good. Is this enough?

Far from it.

Wherefore?

Because, we are unworthy that he should exert his power in helping us, and show how good he is by saving us.

What more then is needful? That each of us should set it down in his mind that God loves him, and is willing to be a Father, and the author of salvation to him. But whence will this appear? From his word, in which he explains his mercy to us in Christ, and testifies of his love towards us.

Then the foundation and beginning of confidence in God is to know him in Christ?

Entirely so.

I should now wish you to tell me in a few words, what the sum of this knowledge is?

It is contained in the Confession of Faith, or rather Formula of Confession, which all Christians have in common. It is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, because from the beginning of the Church it was ever received among all the pious, and because it either fell from the lips of the Apostles, or was faithfully gathered out of their writings.

Repeat it.

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried: he descended into hell; the third day he arose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen. To understand each point more thoroughly, into how many parts shall we divide this confession?

Into four leading ones.

Mention them to me. The first relates to God the Father; the second to his Son Jesus Christ, which also embraces the whole sum of man's redemption; the third to the Holy Spirit; the fourth to the Church, and the Divine blessings conferred upon her.

Since there is no God but one, why do you here mention three, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit?

Because in the one essence of God, it behooves us to look on God the Father as the beginning and origin, and the first cause of all things; next the Son, who is his eternal Wisdom; and, lastly, the Holy Spirit, as his energy diffused indeed over all things, but still perpetually resident in himself.

You mean then that there is no absurdity in holding that these three persons are in one Godhead, and God is not therefore divided?

Just so.

Now repeat the first part.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth."

Why do you call him Father?

Primarily with reference to Christ who is his eternal Wisdom, begotten of him before all time, and being sent into this world was declared to be his Son. We infer, however, that as God is the Father of Jesus Christ, he is our Father also. In what sense do you give him the name of Almighty? Not as having a power which he does not exercise, but as having all things under his power and hand; governing the world by his Providence, determining all things by his will, ruling all creatures as seems to him good.

You do not then suppose an indolent power in God, but consider it such that his hand is always engaged in working, so that nothing is done except through Him, and by his decree.

It is so.

Why do you add "Creator of heaven and earth?" As he has manifested himself to us by works, (Romans 1:20,) in these too we ought to seek him. Our mind cannot take in his essence. The world itself is, therefore, a kind of mirror in which we may view him in so far as it concerns us to know. Do you not understand by "heaven and earth" all creatures whatever that exist?

Yes, verily; under these two names all are included, because they are either heavenly or earthly. But why do you call God a Creator merely, while it is much more excellent to defend and preserve creatures in their state, than to have once made them? This term does not imply that God created his works at once, and then threw off the care of them. It should rather be understood, that as the world was once made by God, so it is now preserved by him, and that the earth and all other things endure just :in as far as they are sustained by his energy, and as it were his hand. Besides, seeing that he has all things under his hand, it follows, that he is the chief ruler and Lord of all. Therefore, by his being "Creator of heaven and earth," we must understand that it is he alone who by wisdom, goodness, and power, guides the whole course and order of nature,: who at once sends rain and drought, hail and other storms, as well as calm, who of his kindness fertilizes the earth, and on the contrary, by withholding his hand, makes it barren: from whom come health and disease; to whose power all things are subject, and whose nod they obey. But what shall we say of wicked men and devils? Shall we say that they too are under him?

Although he does not govern them by his Spirit, he however curbs them by his power as a bridle, so that they cannot even move unless in so far as he permits them. Nay, he even makes them the ministers of his will, so that unwilling and against their own intention, they are forced to execute what to him seems good.

What good redounds to you from the knowledge of this fact?

Very much. It would go ill with us could devils and wicked men do any thing without the will of God, and our minds could never be very tranquil while thinking we were exposed to their caprice. Then only do we rest safely when we know that they are curbed by the will of God, and as it were kept in confinement, so that they cannot do any thing unless by his permission: the, more especially that God has engaged to be our guardian, and the prince of our salvation.

Let us now come to the second part.

It is that we believe "in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord."

What does it chiefly comprehend? That the Son of God is our Savior, and it at the same time explains the method by which he has redeemed us from death, and purchased life.

What is the meaning of the name Jesus which you give to him?

It has the same meaning as the Greek word Swthr (Sorer.) The Latins have no proper name by which its force may be well expressed. Hence the term Savior (Salvator) was commonly received. Moreover, the angel gave this appellation to the Sort of God, by the order of God himself. (Matthew 1:21.) Is this more than if men had given it?

Certainly. For :since God wills that he be called so, he must absolutely be so.

What, next, is the force of the name Christ? By this epithet, his office is still better expressed - for it signifies that he was anointed by the Father to be a King, Priest, and Prophet.

How do you know that?

First, Because Scripture applies anointing to these three uses; secondly, Because it often attributes the three things which we have mentioned to Christ. But with what kind of oil was he anointed? Not with visible oil as was used in consecrating ancient kings, priests, and prophets, but one more excellent, namely, the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is the thing meant by that outward anointing. But what is the nature of this kingdom of his which you mention?

Spiritual, contained in the word and Spirit of God, which carry with them righteousness and life.

What of the priesthood:?

It is the office and prerogative of appearing in the presence of God to obtain grace, and of appeasing his wrath by the offering of a sacrifice which is acceptable to him. In what sense do you call Christ a Prophet?

Because on coming into the world he declared himself an ambassador to men, and an interpreter, and that for the purpose of putting an end to all revelations and prophecies by giving a full exposition of his Father's will. But do you derive any benefit from this?

Nay, all these things have no end but our good. For the Father hath bestowed them on Christ that he may communicate them to us, and all of us thus receive out of his fullness.

State this to me somewhat more fully.

He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and loaded with a perfect abundance of all his gifts, that he may impart them to us, - that is, to each according to the measure which the Father knows to be suited to us. Thus from him, as the only fountain, we draw whatever spiritual blessings we possess.

What does his kingdom bestow upon us? By means of it, obtaining liberty of conscience to live piously and holily, and, being provided with his spiritual riches, we are also armed with power sufficient to overcome the perpetual enemies of our souls - sin, the world, the devil, and the flesh. To what is the Office of priest conducive?

First, by means of it he is the mediator who reconciles us to the Father; and, secondly, access is given us to the Father, so that we too can come with boldness into his presence, and offer him the sacrifice of ourselves, and our all. In this way he makes us, as it were, his colleagues in the priesthood.

There is still prophecy. As it is an office of teaching bestowed on the Son of God in regard to his own servants, the end is that he may enlighten them by the true knowledge of the Father, instruct them in truth, and make them household disciples of God.

All that you have said then comes to this, that the name of Christ comprehends three offices which the Father hath bestowed on the Son, that he may transfuse the virtue and fruit of them into his people?

It is so.

Why do you call him the only Son of God, seeing that God designs to bestow this appellation upon us all? That we are the sons of God we have not from nature, but from adoption and grace only, in other words, because God puts us in that place, (John 1:1 ;) but the Lord Jesus who was begotten of the substance of the Father, and is of one essence with the Father, (Ephesians 1:3,) is by the best title called the only Son of God, because he alone is his Son by nature, (Hebrews 1:1.)

You mean then, that this honor is proper to him, as being due to him by right of nature, whereas it is communicated to us by gratuitous favor, as being his members?

Exactly. Hence with a view to this communication he is called the First-born among many brethren. (Romans 8:29.) In what sense do you understand him to be "our Lord?"

Inasmuch as he was appointed by the Father to have us under his power, to administer the kingdom of God in heaven and on earth, and to be the Head of men and angels. (Colossians 1:15, Colossians 1:18.) What is meant by what follows?

It shows the manner in which the Son was anointed by the Father to be our Savior - namely, that having assumed our nature, he performed all things necessary to our salvation as here enumerated.

What mean you by the two sentences - "Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary?" That he was formed in the womb of the virgin, of her substance, to be the true seed of David, as had been foretold by the Prophets, and that this was effected by the miraculous and secret agency of the Spirit without human connection. (Psalms 132:11; Matthew 1:1; Luke 1:32.) Was it of consequence then that he should assume our nature?

Very much so; because it was necessary that the disobedience committed by man against God should be expiated also in human nature. Nor could he in any other way be our Mediator to make reconciliation between God and man. (Romans 3:24; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 5:7.) You say that Christ behooved to become man, that he might, as it were, in our person accomplish the work of salvation? So I think. For we must borrow of him whatever is wanting in ourselves: and this cannot be done in any other way. But why was that effected by the Holy Spirit, and not by the common and usual form of generation? As the seed of man is entirely corrupt, it was necessary that the operation of the Holy Spirit should interfere in the generation of the Son of God, that he might not be affected by this contagion, but endued with the most perfect purity.

Hence then we learn that he who sanctifies us is free from every stain, and was possessed of purity, so to speak, from the original womb, so that he was wholly sacred to God, being unpolluted by any taint of the human race? That is my understanding.

How is he our Lord?

He was appointed by the Father to rule us, and having obtained the empire and dominion of God both in heaven and on earth, to be recognized as the head of angels and good men. (Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:18.) Why do you leap at once from his birth to his death, passing over the whole history of his life?

Because nothing is treated of here but what so properly belongs to our salvation, as in a manner to contain the substance of it.

Why do you not say in one word simply "was dead," (died,) but also add the name of the governor under whom he suffered? That has respect not ,rely to the credit of the statement, but also to let us know that his death was connected with condemnation.

Explain this more clearly.

He died to discharge the penalty due by us, and in this way exempt us from it. But as we all being sinners were obnoxious to the judgment of God, he, that he might act as our substitute, was pleased to be sisted in presence of an earthly judge, and condemned by his mouth, that we might be acquitted before the celestial tribunal of God. But Pilate pronounces him innocent, and therefore does not condemn him as a malefactor. (Matthew 27:24.)

It is necessary to attend to both things. The judge bears testimony to his innocence, to prove that he suffered not for his own misdeeds but ours, and he is formally condemned by the sentence of the same judge, to make it plain that he endured the sentence which he deserved as our surety, that thus he might free us from guilt.

Well answered. Were he a sinner he would not be a fit surety to pay the penalty of another's sin; and yet that his condemnation might obtain our acquittal, he behooved to be classed among transgressors?

I understand so. Is there any greater importance in his having been crucified than if he hath suffered any other kind of death?

Very much greasier, as Paul also reminds us, (Galatians 3:13,) when he says, that he hung upon a tree to take our curse upon himself and free us from it. For that kind of death was doomed to execration. (Deuteronomy 21:23.) What? Is not an affront put upon the Son of God when it is said that even before God he was subjected to the curse? By no means; since by undergoing he abolished it, and yet meanwhile he ceased not to be blessed in order that he might visit us with his blessing.

Go on.

Since death was the punishment imposed on man because of sin, the Son of God endured it, and by enduring overcame it. But to make it more manifest that he underwent a real death, he chose to be placed in the tomb like other men. But nothing seems to be derived, to us from this victory, since we still die? That is no obstacle. Nor to, believers is death now any thing else than a passage to a better life.

Hence it follows that death is no longer to be dreaded as if it were a fearful thing, but we should with intrepid mind follow Christ our leader, who as he did not perish in death, will not suffer us to perish?

Thus should we act.

It is immediately added, "he descended into hell." What does this mean? That he not only endured common death, which is the separation of the soul from the body, but also the pains of death, as Peter calls them. (Acts 2:24.) By this expression I understand the fearful agonies by which his soul was pierced.

Give me the cause and the manner of this. As in order to satisfy for sinners he sisted himself before the tribunal of God, it was necessary that he should suffer excruciating agony of conscience, as if he had been forsaken of God, nay as it were, had God hostile to him. He was in this agony when he exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46.) Was his Father then offended with him? By no means. But he exercised this severity against him in fulfillment of what had been foretold by Isaiah, that "he was smitten by the hand of God for our sins and wounded for our transgressions." (Isaiah 53:4-5.) But seeing he is God, how could he be seized with any such dread, as if he were forsaken of God?

We must hold that it was in respect to the feelings of his human nature that he was reduced to this necessity: and that this might be, his divinity for a little while was concealed, that is, did not put forth its might.

How, on the other hand, is it possible that Christ, who is the salvation of the world, should have been subjected to this doom?

He did not endure it so as to remain under it. For though he was seized with the terrors I have mentioned, he was not overwhelmed. Rather wrestling with the power of hell he subdued and crushed it.

Hence we infer that the torture of conscience which he bore differs from that which excruciates sinners when pursued by the hands of an angry God. For what was temporary in him is perpetual in them, and what was in him only the prick: of a sting, is in them a mortal sword, which, so to speak, wounds the heart.

It is so. The Son of God when beset by this anguish, ceased, not to hope in the Father. But sinners condemned by the justice of God, rush into despair, murmur against him, and even break forth into open blasphemies. May we hence infer what benefit believers receive from the death of Christ?

Easily. And, first, we see that it is a sacrifice by which he expiated our sins before God, and so having appeased the wrath of God, restored us to his favor. Secondly, That his blood is a laver by which our souls are cleansed from all stains. Lastly, That the remembrance of our sins was effaced so as never to come into the view of God, and that thus the handwriting which established our guilt was blotted out and canceled. Does it not gain us any other advantage besides?

Yes, indeed. For by its benefit, if we are members of Christ, our old man is crucified, and the body of sin is destroyed, so that the lusts of a depraved flesh no longer reign in us.

Proceed with the other articles. The next is, "On the third day he rose again from the dead." By this he declared himself the conqueror of sin and death. By his resurrection he swallowed up death, broke the fetters of the devil, and annihilated all his power.

How manifold are the benefits resulting to us from the resurrection?

Threefold. For by it righteousness was acquired for us; it is also a sure pledge to us of our immortality; and even now by virtue of it we are raised to newness of life, that by living purely and holily we may obey the will of God.

Let us follow out the rest.

"He ascended into heaven." Did he ascend so that he is no more on the earth?

He did. For after he had performed all the things which the Father had given him to do, and which were for our salvation, there was no need of his continuing longer on earth.

What good do we obtain from this ascension? The benefit is twofold. For inasmuch as Christ entered heaven in our name, just as he had come down to earth on our account, he also opened up an access for us, so that the door, previously shut because of sin, is now open. Secondly, he appears in the presence of God as our advocate and intercessor. But did Christ in going to heaven withdraw from us, so that he has now ceased to be with us? Not at all. On the contrary, he has engaged to be with us even to the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20.) When we say he dwells with us, must we understand that he is bodily present?

No. The case of the body which was received into heaven is one thing; that of the virtue which is everywhere diffused is another. (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:11.) In what sense do you say that he "sitteth on the right hand of the Father?"

These words mean that the Father bestowed upon him the dominion of heaven and earth, so that he governs all things. (Matthew 28:18.) But what is meant by "righthand," and what by "sitteth?"

It is a similitude taken from princes, who are wont to place those on their right hand whom they make their vicegerents.

You therefore mean nothing more than Paul says, namely, that Christ has been appointed head of the Church, and raised above all principalities, has obtained a name which is above every name. (Ephesians 1:22; Php 2:9.) It is as you say.

Let us pass on.

"From thence he will come to judge the quick and the dead." The meaning of these words is, that he will come openly from heaven to judge the world, just as he was seen to ascend. (Acts 1:11.) As the day of judgment is not to be before the end of the world, how do you say that some men will then be alive, seeing it is appointed unto all men once to die? (Hebrews 9:27.)

Paul answers this question when he says, that those who then survive will undergo a sudden change, so that the corruption of the flesh being abolished, they will put on in-corruption. (1 Corinthians 15:51; 1 Thessalonians 4:17.)

You understand then that this change will be like death; that there will be an abolition of the first nature, and the beginning of a new nature? That is my meaning. Does it give any delight to our conscience that Christ will one day be the judge of the world?

Indeed singular delight. For we know assuredly that he will come only for our salvation.

We should not then tremble at this judgment, so as to let it fill us with dismay?

No, indeed; since we shall only stand at the tribunal of a judge who is also our advocate, and who has taken us under his faith and protection.

Let us come now to the third part.

It relates to faith in the Holy Spirit.

What do we learn by it? The object is to let us know that God, as he hath redeemed and saved us by his Son, will also by his Spirit make us capable of this redemption and salvation.

How? As we have purification in the blood of Christ, so our consciences must be sprinkled by it in order to be washed. (1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 1:7.) This requires a clearer explanation.

I mean that the Spirit of God, while he dwells in our hearts, makes us feel the virtue of Christ. (Romans 8:11.) For when our minds conceive the benefits of Christ, it is owing to the illumination of the Holy Spirit; to his persuasion it is owing that they are sealed in our hearts. (Ephesians 1:13.) In short, he alone makes room in us for them. Heregenerates us and makes us to be new creatures. Accordingly, whatever gifts are offered us in Christ, we receive by the agency of the Spirit.

Let us proceed.

Next comes the fourth part, in which we confess that we believe in one Holy Catholic Church.

What is the Church? The body and society of believers whom God hath predestined to eternal life. Is it necessary to believe this article also?

Yes, verily, if we would not make the death of Christ without effect, and set at nought all that has hitherto been said. For the one effect resulting from all is, that there is Church.

You mean then that we only treated of the cause of salvation, and showed the foundation of it when we explained that by the merits and intercession of Christ, we are taken into favor by God, and that this grace is confirmed in us by virtue of the Spirit. Now, however, we are explaining the effect, of all these things, that by facts our faith may be made more firm?

It is so. In what sense do you call the Church holy?

All whom God has chosen he justifies, and forms to holiness and innocence of life, (Romans 8:30,) that his glory may be displayed in them. And this is what Paul means when he says that Christ sanctified the Church which he redeemed, that it might be a glorious Church, free from all blemish. (Ephesians 5:25.) What is meant by the epithet Catholic or Universal? By it we are taught, that as all believers have one head, so they must all be united into one body, that the Church diffused over the whole world may be one - not more. (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12.) And what is the purport of what immediately follows concerning the communion of saints? That is put down to express more clearly the unity which exists among the members of the Church. It is at the same time intimated, that whatever benefits God bestows upon the Church, have a view to the common good of all; seeing they all have communion with each other. But is this holiness which you attribute to the Church already perfect? Not yet, that is as long as she has her warfare in this world. For she always labors under infirmities, and will never be entirely purged of the remains of vice, until she adheres completely to Christ her head, by whom she is sanctified. Can this Church be known in any other way than when she is believed by faith?

There is indeed also a visible Church of God, which he has described to us by certain signs and marks, but here we are properly speaking of the assemblage of those whom he has adopted to

salvation, by his secret election. This is neither at all times visible to the eye nor discernible by signs.

What comes next?

I believe in "the forgiveness of sins."

What meaning do you give to the word forgiveness? That God of his free goodness forgives and pardons the sins of believers that they may not be brought to judgment, and that the penalty may not be exacted from them.

Hence it follows, that it is not at all by our own satisfaction we merit the pardon of sins, which we obtain from the Lord? That is true; for Christ alone gave the satisfaction by paying the penalty.

Why do you subjoin forgiveness of sins to the Church?

Because no man obtains it without being previously united to the people of God, maintaining unity with the body of Christ perseveringly to the end, and thereby attesting that he is a true member of the Church. In this way you conclude that out of the Church is nought but ruin and damnation?

Certainly. Those who make a departure from the body of Christ, and rend its unity by faction, are cut off from all hope of salvation during the time they remain in this schism, be it however short.

Repeat the remainder.

I believe in "the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting." To what end is this article set down in the Confession of Faith? To remind us that our happiness is not situated on the earth. The utility and use of this knowledge is twofold. First, we are taught by it that we are to live in this world as foreigners, continually thinking of departure, and not allowing our hearts to be entangled by earthly thoughts. Secondly, however the fruit of the grace of Christ bestowed upon us may escape our notice, and be hidden from our eyes, we must not despond, but patiently wait for the day of revelation. In what order will this resurrection take place?

Those who were formerly dead will recover their bodies, the same bodies as before, but endued with a new quality, that is, no longer liable to death or corruption. (1 Corinthians 15:53.) Those who survive God will miraculously raise up by a sudden change. But will this be common to the righteous and the wicked?

There will be one resurrection of all, but the condition will be different: some will rise to salvation and blessedness, others to death and extreme misery.

Why then is eternal life only here mentioned, and is there no mention of hell?

Because nothing is introduced here that does not tend to the consolation of pious minds; accordingly, only the rewards are enumerated which the Lord hath prepared for his servants, and nothing is added as to the doom of the wicked, whom we know to be aliens from the kingdom of God. As we understand the foundation on which faith ought to rest, it will be easy to extract from it a true definition of faith.

It will. It may be defined - a sure and steadfast knowledge of the paternal goodwill of God toward us, as he declares in the gospel that for the sake of Christ he will be our Father and Savior. Do we

conceive faith of ourselves, or do we receive it from God Scripture teaches that it is the special gift of God, and this experience confirms.

What experience do you mean? Our mind is too rude to be able to comprehend the spiritual wisdom of God which is revealed to us by faith, and our hearts are too prone; either to diffidence or to a perverse confidence in ourselves or creatures, to rest in God of their own accord. But the Holy Spirit by his illumination makes us capable of understanding those things which would otherwise far exceed our capacity, and forms us to a firm persuasion, by sealing the promises of salvation on our hearts.

What good accrues to us from this faith, when we have once obtained it?

It justifies us before God, and this justification makes us the heirs of everlasting life.

What! are not men justified by good works when they study to approve themselves to God, by living innocently and holily? Could any one be found so perfect, he might justly be deemed righteous, but as we are all sinners, guilty before God in many ways, we must seek elsewhere for a worthiness which may reconcile us to him. But are all the works of men so vile and valueless that they cannot merit favor with God?

First, all the works which proceed from us, so as properly to be called our own, are vicious, and therefore they can do nothing but displease God, and be rejected by him.

You say then that before we are born again and formed anew by the Spirit of God, we can do nothing but sin, just as a bad tree can only produce bad fruit? (Matthew 7:18.)

Altogether so. For whatever semblance works may have in the eyes of men: they are nevertheless evil, as long as the heart to which God chiefly looks is depraved.

Hence you conclude, that we cannot by any merits anticipate God or call forth his beneficence; or rather that all the works which we try or engage in, subject us to his anger and condemnation?

I understand so; and therefore mere mercy, without any respect to works, (Titus 3:5,) embraces and accepts us freely in Christ, by attributing his righteousness to us as if it were our own, and not imputing our sins to us. In what way, then, do you say that we are justified by faith?

Because, while we embrace the promises of the gospel with sure heartfelt confidence, we in a manner obtain possession of the righteousness of which I speak. This then is your meaning - that as righteousness is offered to us by the gospel, so we receive it by faith?

It is so. But after we have once been embraced by God, are not the works which we do under the direction of his Holy Spirit accepted by him?

They please him, not however in virtue of their own worthiness, but as he liberally honors them with his favor. But seeing they proceed from the Holy Spirit, do they not merit favor?

They are always mixed up with some defilement from the weakness of the flesh, and thereby vitiated.

Whence then or how can it be that they please God?

It is faith alone which procures favor for them, as we rest with assured confidence on this - that God wills not to try them by his strict rule, but covering their defects and impurities as buried in the purity of Christ, he regards them in the same light as if they' were absolutely perfect. But can we infer from this that a Christian man is justified by works after he has been called by God, or that by the merit of works he makes himself loved by God, whose love is eternal life to us? By no means. We rather hold what is written - that no man can be justified in his sight, and we therefore pray, "Enter not into judgment with us." (Psalms 143:2) We are not therefore to think that the good works of believers are useless?

Certainly not. For not in vain does God promise them reward both in this life and in the future. But this reward springs from the free love of God as its source; for he first embraces us as sons, and then burying the remembrance of the vices which proceed from us, he visits us with his favor. But can this righteousness be separated from good works, so that he who has it; may be void of them? That cannot be. For when by faith we receive Christ as he is offered to us, he not only promises :us deliverance from death and reconciliation with God, but also the gift of the Holy Spirit, by which we are regenerated to newness of life; these things midst necessarily be conjoined so as not to divide ,Christ from himself.

Hence it follows that; faith is the root from which all good works spring, so far is it from taking us off from the study of them? So indeed it is; and hence the whole doctrine of the gospel is comprehended! under the two branches, faith and repentance.

What is repentance?

Dissatisfaction with and a hatred of sin and a love of righteousness, proceeding from the fear of God, which things lead to self-denial and mortification of the flesh, so that we give ourselves up to the guidance of the Spirit of God, and frame all the actions of our life to the obedience of the Divine will. But this second branch was in the division which was set down at first when you showed the method of duly worshipping God.

True; and it was at the same time added, that the true and legitimate rule for worshipping God is to obey his will.

Why so?

Because the only worship which he approves is not that which it may please us to devise, but that which he hath of his own authority prescribed.

1545 - (Part 2) - The Law

OF THE LAW, THAT IS THE TEN COMMANDMENTS OF GOD.

What is the rule of life which he has given us? His law.

What does it contain?

It consists of two parts; the former of which contains four commandments, the latter six. Thus the whole law consists of ten commandments in all. Who is the author of this division?

God himself, who delivered it to Moses written on two tables, and afterwards declared that it was reduced into ten sentences. (Exodus 24:12; Exodus 32:15; Exodus 34:1; Deuteronomy 4:13; Deuteronomy 10:4.) What is the subject of the first table? The offices of piety towards God. Of the second?

How we are to act towards men, and what we owe them.

Repeat the first commandment or head.

Hear, O Israel, I am Jehovah thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Now explain the meaning of the words. At first he makes a kind of preface to the whole law. For when he calls himself Jehovah, he claims right and authority to command. Then in order to procure favor for his law, he adds, that he is our God. These words have the same force as if he had called himself our Preserver. Now as he bestows this favor upon us, it is meet that we should in our turn show ourselves to be an obedient people. But does not what he immediately subjoins, as to deliverance and breaking the yoke of Egyptian bondage, apply specially to the people of Israel, and to them alone?

I admit this as to the act itself, but there is another kind of deliverance which applies equally to all men. For he has delivered us all from the spiritual bondage of sin, and the tyranny of the devil.

Why does he mention that matter in a preface to his law? To remind us that we will be guilty of the greatest ingratitude if we do not devote ourselves entirely to obedience to him. And what does he require under this first head? That we maintain his honor entire and for himself alone, not transferring any part of it elsewhere.

What is the honor peculiar to him which it is unlawful to transfer elsewhere! To adore him, to put our confidence in him, to call upon him, in short to pay him all the deference suitable to his majesty.

Why is the clause added, "Before my face?" As nothing is so hidden as to escape him, and he is the discernor and judge of secret thoughts, it means that he requires not the honor of outward affection merely, but true heartfelt piety.

Let us pass to the second head.

Thou shalt not sculpture to thyself the image, or form any of those things which are either in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. Thou shalt not adore nor serve them. Does it entirely prohibit us from sculpturing or painting any resemblance?

No; it only forbids, us to make any resemblances for the sake of representing or worshipping God.

Why is it. unlawful to represent God by a visible shape?

S. Because there is no resemblance between him who is an eternal Spirit and incomprehensible, and a corporeal, corruptible, and lifeless figure. (Deuteronomy 4:15; Acts 17:29; Romans 1:23.) You think then that an insult is offered to his majesty when he is represented in this way?

Such is my belief.

What kind of worship is here condemned? When we turn to a statue or image intending to pray, we prostrate ourselves before it: when we pay honor to it by the bending of our knees, or other signs, as if God were there representing himself to us.

We are not to understand then that simply any kind of picture or sculpture is condemned by these words. We are only prohibited from making images for the purpose of seeking or worshipping God in them, or which is the same thing, for the purpose of worshipping them in honor of God, or abusing them in any way to superstition and idolatry.

True.

Now to what end shall we refer this head? As under the former head he declared that he alone should be worshipped and served, so he now shows what is the correct form of worship, that he may call us off from all superstition, and other vicious and carnal fictions.

Let us proceed.

He adds the sanction that he is Jehovah our God, a strong and jealous God, who avengeth the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of them who hate him, even to the third and fourth generation.

Why does he make mention of his strength?

He thereby intimates that he has power enough to vindicate his glory.

What does he intimate by the term jealousy? That he cannot bear an equal or associate. For as he has given himself to us out of his infinite goodness, so he would have us to be wholly his. And the chastity of our souls consists in being dedicated to him, and wholly cleaving to him, as on the other hand they are said to be polluted with idolatry, when they turn aside from him to superstition. In what sense is it said that he avengeth the iniquity of fathers on children? To strike the more terror into us, he not only threatens to inflict punishment on those who offend him, but that their offspring also will be cursed. But is it consistent with the justice of God to punish any one for another's fault?

If we consider what the condition of mankind is, the question is answered. For by nature we are all liable to the curse, and we have nothing to complain of in God when he leaves us in this condition.

Then as he demonstrates his love for the righteous, by blessing their posterity, so he executes his vengeance against the wicked, by depriving their children of this blessing.

Go on. To allure us by attractive mildness, he promises that he will take pity on all who love him and observe his commands, to a thousand generations. Does he mean that the innocence of a pious man will be the salvation of all his posterity, however wicked? Not at all, but that he will exercise his benignity to believers to such a degree, that for their sakes he will show himself benign also to their children, by not only giving them prosperity in regard to the present life, but also sanctifying their souls, so as to give them a place among his flock.

M. But this does not always appear.

I admit it. For as he reserves to himself liberty to show mercy when he pleases to the children of the ungodly, so he has not so astricted his favor to the children of believers as not to repudiate at pleasure those of them whom he will. (Romans 9:1-33.) This, however, he so tempers as to show that his promise is not vain or fallacious. But why does he, here say a thousand generations, whereas, in the case of punishment, he mentions only three or four? To intimate that he is more inclined to kindness and beneficence than to severity. This he also declares, when he says that he is ready to pardon, but slow to wrath. (Exodus 34:6; Psalms 103:8; Psalms 145:8.) Now for the third commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain.

What is the meaning?

He forbids us to abuse the name of God, not only by perjury, but by swearing without necessity. Can the name of God be lawfully used in making oath

It may indeed, when used on a fit cause: first, in asserting the truth; and secondly, when the business is of such importance as to make it meet to swear, in maintaining mutual love and concord among men. But does it not go farther than to restrain oaths, by which the name of God is profaned, or his honor impaired? The mention of one species admonishes us in general, never to utter the name of God unless with fear and reverence, and for the purpose, of honoring it. For while it is thrice holy, we ought to guard, by all means, against seeming to hold it in contempt, or giving others occasion to contemn.

How is this to be done? By never speaking or thinking of God and his works without honor.

What follows A sanction, by which he declares that he shall not be guiltless who taketh his name in vain. As he, in another place, declares that he will punish the transgressors of his law, what more is contained here?

He hereby meant to intimate how much he values the glory of his name, and to make us more careful of it, when we see that vengeance is ready for any who may profane it.

Let us come to the fourth commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within

thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it. Does he order us to labor on six days, that we may rest on the seventh? Not absolutely; but allowing man six days for labor, he excepts the seventh, that it may be devoted to rest. Does he interdict us from all kind of labor? This commandment has a separate and peculiar reason. As the observance of rest is part of the old ceremonies, it was abolished by the advent of Christ. Do you mean that this commandment properly refers to the Jews, and was therefore merely temporary? I do, in as far as it is ceremonial.

What then? Is there any thing under it beyond ceremony?

It was given for three reasons.

State them to me. To figure spiritual rest; for the preservation of ecclesiastical polity; and for the relief of slaves.

What do you mean by spiritual rest? When we keep holiday from our own works, that God may perform his own works in us.

What, moreover, is the method of thus keeping holiday? By crucifying our flesh, - that is, renouncing our own inclination, that we may be governed by the Spirit of God. Is it sufficient to do so on the seventh day?

Nay, continually. After we have once begun, we must continue during the whole course of life.

Why, then, is a certain day appointed to figure it?

There is no necessity that the reality should agree with the figure in every respect, provided it be suitable in so far as is required for the purpose of figuring. But why is the seventh day prescribed rather than any other day? In Scripture the number seven implies perfection. It is, therefore, apt for denoting perpetuity. It, at the same time, indicates that this spiritual rest is only begun in this life, and will not be perfect until we depart from this world. But what is meant when the Lord exhorts us to rest by his own example?

Having finished the creation of the world in six days: he dedicated the seventh to the contemplation of his works. The more strongly to stimulate us to this, he set before us his own example. For nothing is more desirable than to be formed after his image. But ought meditation on the works of God to be continual, or is it sufficient that one day out of seven be devoted to it?

It becomes us to be daily exercised in it, but because of our weakness, one day is specially appointed. And this is the polity which I mentioned.

What order, then, is to be observed on that day? That the people meet to hear the doctrine of Christ, to engage in public prayer, and make profession of their faith.

Now explain what you meant by saying that the Lord intended by this commandment to provide also for the relief of slaves. That some relaxation might be given to those under the power of others. Nay, this, too, tends to maintain a common polity. For when one day is devoted to rest, every one accustoms himself to labor during the other days.

Let us now see how far this command has reference to us. In regard to the ceremony, I hold that it was abolished, as the reality existed in Christ. (Colossians 2:17.)

How?

Because, by virtue of his death, our old man is crucified, and we are raised up to newness of life. (Romans 6:6.) What of the commandment then remains for us? Not to neglect the holy ordinances which contribute to the spiritual polity of the Church; especially to frequent sacred assemblies, to hear the word of God, to celebrate the sacraments, and engage in the regular prayers, as enjoined. But does the figure give us nothing more?

Yes, indeed. We must give heed to the thing meant by it; namely, that being engrafted into the body of Christ, and made his members, we cease from our own works, and so resign ourselves to the government of God.

Let us pass to the second table.

It begins, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

What meaning do you give to the word "honor?" That children be, with modesty and humility, respectful and obedient to parents, serving them reverentially, helping them in necessity, and exerting their labor for them. For in these three branches is included the honor which is due to parents.

Proceed. To the commandment, the promise is added, "That thy days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord thy God will give thee."

What is the meaning?

That, by the blessing of God, long life will be given to those who pay due honor to parents.

Seeing this life is so full of troubles, why does God promise the long continuance of it as a blessing?

How great soever the miseries to which it is liable, yet there is a blessing from God upon believers, when he nourishes and preserves them here, were it only for this one reason, that it is a proof of his paternal favor. Does it follow conversely, that he who is snatched away from the world quickly, and before mature age, is cursed of God? By no means, Nay, rather it sometimes happens that the more a man is loved by God the more quickly is he removed out of this life. But in so acting, how does he fulfill his promise?

Whatever earthly good God promises we must receive under this condition, viz., in so far as is expedient for the good and salvation of our soul. For the arrangement would be very absurd if the care of the soul did not always take precedence.

What of those who are contumacious to parents?

They shall not only be punished at the last judgment, but here also God will take vengeance on their bodies, either by taking them hence in the middle of their days, or bringing them to an ignominious end, or in other manners. But does not the promise speak expressly of the land of Canaan?

It does so in as far as regards the Israelites, but the term ought to have a wider and more extensive meaning to us. For seeing that the, whole earth is the Lord's, whatever be the region we inhabit he assigns it to us for a possession. (Psalms 24:1; Psalms 85:5; Psalms 115:16.) Is there nothing more of the commandment remaining?

Though father and mother only are expressed, we must understand all who are over us, as the reason is the same.

What is the reason? That the Lord has raised them to a high degree of honor; for there is no authority whether of parents, or princes, or rulers of any description, no power, no honor, but by the decree of God, because it so pleases him to order the world.

Repeat the sixth commandment.

Thou shalt not kill. Does it forbid nothing but the perpetration of murder?

Yes, indeed. For seeing it is God who speaks, he here gives law not only to outward works, but also to the affections of the mind, and indeed to them chiefly.

You seem to insinuate that there is some kind of secret murder from which God here recalls us.

I do. For anger, and hatred, and any desire to hurt, is murder in the sight, of God. Is it enough if we do not hate any one? By no means. Since the Lord, by condemning hatred and restraining us from any harm by which our neighbor may be injured, shows at the same time that he requires us to love all men from the hebert, and study faithfully to defend and preserve them.

Now for the seventh commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Explain what the substance of it is. That all kinds of fornication are cursed in the sight of God, and therefore as we would not provoke the anger of God against us we must carefully abstain from it. Does it require nothing besides?

Respect must always be had to the nature of the Lawgiver, who, we have said, not only regards the outward act, but looks more to the affections of the mind.

What more then does it comprehend?

Inasmuch as both our bodies and our souls are temples of the Holy Spirit, (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19,) we must observe a chaste purity with both, and accordingly be chaste not only by abstaining from outward flagitiousness, but also in heart, speech, bodily gesture, and action, (2 Corinthians 6:16 ;) in short, our body must be free from all lasciviousness, our mind from all lust, and no part of us be polluted by the defilements of unchastity.

Let us come to the eighth commandment.

Thou shalt not steal. Does it only prohibit the thefts which are punished by human laws, or does it go farther?

Under the name of theft, it comprehends all kinds of wicked acts of defrauding and circumventing by which we hunt after other men's goods. Here, therefore, we are forbidden either to seize upon

our neighbor's goods by violence, or lay hands upon them by trick and cunning, or get possession of them by any other indirect means whatever. Is it enough to withhold your hand from the evil act, or is covetousness also here condemned?

We must ever return to this - that the law given, being spiritual, intends to check not only outward thefts, but all counsels and wishes which incommode others in any way; and especially covetousness itself, that we may not long to enrich ourselves at the expense of our brethren.

What then must be done to obey this commandment?

We must endeavor to let every man have his own in safety.

What is the ninth commandment?

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor. Does it prohibit perjury in court only, or any kind of lying against our neighbors?

Under one species the general doctrine is comprehended, that we are not to charge our neighbor falsely, nor by our evil speaking and detraction hurt his good name, or harm him in his goods. But why does it expressly mention public perjury? That it may inspire us with a greater abhorrence of this vice. For it insinuates that if a man accustom himself to evil speaking and calumny, the descent to perjury is rapid if an opportunity is given to defame his neighbor. Does it mean to keep us from evil speaking only, or also from false suspicion and unjust and uncharitable judgment?

It here condemns both, according to the view already stated. For whatever it is wrong to do before men, it is wrong to wish before God.

Explain then what it means in substance.

It enjoins us not to think ill of our neighbors, or be prone to defame them, but in the spirit of kindness and impartiality to think well of them as far as the truth will permit, and study to preserve their reputation entire.

Repeat the last commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbor's.

Seeing that the whole law is spiritual, as you have so often said before, and the above commandments are set down not only to curb outward acts, but also correct the affections of the mind, what more is added here? The Lord meant to regulate and govern the will and affections by the other commandments, but here he imposes a law even on thoughts which carry some degree of covetousness along with them, and yet come not the length of a fixed purpose. Do you say that the least degrees of covetousness which creep in upon believers and enter their minds are sins, even though they resist rather than assent?

It is certainly clear that all vicious thoughts, even though consent is not added, proceed from the pravity of our nature. But I only say this - that this commandment condemns vicious desires which tickle and solicit the heart of man, without however drawing him on to a firm and deliberate act of will.

You understand then that the evil affections in which men acquiesce, and by which they allow themselves to be overcome, were prohibited before, but that the thing now required of us is such strict integrity that our hearts are not to admit any perverse desire by which they may be stimulated to sin?

Exactly so. Can we now frame a short compendium of the whole law?

Very easily, since we can reduce it to two heads. The former is to love God with all our heart, and soul, and strength - the latter, to love our neighbors as ourselves.

What is comprehended under the love of God? To love him as God should be loved - that is, recognizing him as at once our Lord, and Father, and Preserver. Accordingly, to the love of God is joined reverence for him, a willingness to obey him, trust to be placed in him.

What do you understand by the whole heart, the whole soul, and the whole strength?

Such vehemence of zeal, that there be no place at all in us for any thoughts, desires, or pursuits, adverse to this love.

What is the meaning of the second head? As we are by nature so prone to love ourselves, that this feeling overcomes all others, so love to our neighbor ought to have such ascendancy in us as to govern us in every respect, and be the rule of all our purposes and actions.

What do you understand by the term neighbor? Not only kindred and friends, or those connected with us by any necessary tie, but also those who are unknown to us, and even enemies. But what connection have they with us

They are connected by that tie by which God bound the whole human race together. This tie is sacred and inviolable, and no man's depravity can abolish it.

You say, then, that if any man hate us, the blame is his own, and yet he is nevertheless our neighbor, and as such is to be regarded by us, because the divine arrangement by which this connection between us was ratified stands inviolable?

It is so.

Seeing that the law of God points out the form of duly worshipping him, must we not live according to its direction?

We must indeed. But we all labor under infirmity, owing to which no man fulfills, in every respect, what he ought.

Why then does God require a perfection which is beyond our ability?

He requires nothing which we are not bound to perform. But provided we strive after that form of living which is here prescribed, although we be wide of the mark, that is, of perfection, the Lord forgives us what is wanting. Do you speak of all men in general, or of believers only?

He who is not yet regenerated by the Spirit of God, is not fit to begin the least iota of the law. Besides, even were we to grant that any one is found to obey the law in any respect, we do not think: that he has performed his part before God. For the law pronounces all cursed who have not

fulfilled all the things contained in it. (Deuteronomy 27:26; Galatians 3:10.) Hence we must conclude, that as there are two classes of men, so the office of the law is twofold?

Exactly. For among unbelievers it does nothing more than shut them out from all excuse before God. And this is what Paul means when he calls it the ministry of death and condemnation. In regard to believers it has a very different use. (Romans 1:32; 2 Corinthians 3:6.)

What?

First, while they learn, from it that they cannot obtain righteousness by works, they are trained to humility, which is the true preparation for seeking salvation in Christ. Secondly, inasmuch as it requires of them much more than they are able to perform, it urges them to seek strength from the Lord, and at the same time reminds them of their perpetual guilt, that they may not presume to be proud. Lastly, it is a kind of curb, by which they are kept, in the fear of the Lord. (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; Galatians 3:11; Galatians 4:5.)

Therefore, although in this earthly pilgrimage we never satisfy the law, we cannot judge that it is superfluous to require this strict perfection from us. For it shows the mark at which we ought to aim, the goal towards which we ought to press, that each of us, according to the measure of grace bestowed upon him, may endeavor to frame his life according to the highest rectitude, and, by constant study, continually advance more and more. That is my view. Have we not a perfect rule of righteousness in the law So much so, that God wishes nothing else from us than to follow it; and, on the other hand, repudiates and holds void whatever we undertake beyond its prescription. For the only sacrifice which he accepts is obedience. (1 Samuel 15:22.) To what end, then, the many admonitions, precepts, exhortations, which both Prophets and Apostles are continually employing? (Jeremiah 7:12.)

They are nothing but mere expositions of the law, which lead us by the hand to the obedience of the law, rather than lead us away from it. But he gives no command concerning the private case of each individual? When he orders us to render to every one his due, it is obvious to infer what the private part of each is in his own order and condition of life, and expositions of particular precepts, as has been said, lie scattered throughout Scripture. For what the Lord has summarily comprised here in a few words, is given with more fullness and detail elsewhere.

1545 - (Part 3) - Prayer

OF PRAYER As the second part of Divine Worship, which consists in service and obedience, has been sufficiently discussed, let us now proceed to the, third part.

We said it was revocation, by which we flee to God in any necessity. Do you think that he alone is to be invoked?

Certainly; for he requires this as the proper worship of his Divinity.

If it is so, how can we beseech men to assist us?

There is a great, difference between the two things. For when we invoke God, we testify that we expect no good from any other quarter, and that we place our whole defense in no other, and yet we ask the assistance of men, as far as he permits, and has bestowed on them the power of giving it.

You say, then, that in having recourse to the faith and help of men, there, is nothing that interferes with our invocation of God, seeing that our reliance is not fixed on them, and we beseech them on no other ground, than just because God, by furnishing them with the means of well-doing, has in a manner destined them to be the ministers of his beneficence, and is pleased by their hands to assist us, and draw out, on our account, the resources which he has deposited with them?

Such is my view. And, accordingly, whatever benefits we receive from them, we should regard as coming from God, as in truth it is he alone who bestows all these things upon us by their instrumentality. But are we not to feel grateful to men whenever they have conferred any kindness upon us. This the mere equity of nature and law of humanity dictates?

Certainly we are; and were it only for the reason that God honors them by sending to us, through their hands, as rivulets, the blessings which flow from the inexhaustible fountain of his liberality. In this way he lays us under obligation to them, and wishes us to acknowledge it. He, therefore, who does not show himself grateful to them by so doing, betrays his ingratitude to God. Are we hence at liberty to infer, that it is wrong to invoke angels and holy servants of the Lord who have departed this life?

We are not at liberty; for God does not assign to saints the office of assisting us. And in regard to angels, though he uses their labor for our salvation, he does not wish us to ask them for it.

You say, then, that whatever does not aptly and fitly square with the order instituted by God, is repugnant to his will?

I do. For it is a sure sign of unbelief not to be contented with the things which God gives to us. Then if we throw ourselves on the protection of angels or saints, when God calls us to himself alone, and transfer to them the confidence which ought wholly to be fixed upon God, we fall into idolatry, seeing we share with them that which God claimed entirely for himself;

Let us now consider the manner of prayer. Is it sufficient to pray with the tongue, or does prayer require also the mind and heart? The tongue, indeed, is not always necessary, but true prayer can never be without understanding and affection. By what argument will you prove this to me?

Since God is a Spirit, he requires men to give him the heart in all cases, and more especially in prayer, by which they hold communion with him. Wherefore he promises to be near to those only who call upon him in truth: on the other hand, he abominates and curses all who pray to him deceitfully, and not sincerely. (Psalms 145:18; Isaiah 29:13.) All prayers, then, conceived only by the tongue, will be vain and worthless? Not only so, but will be most displeasing to God.

What kind of feeling does God require in prayer

First, that we feel our want and misery, and that this feeling beget sorrow and anxiety in our minds. Secondly, that we be inflamed with an earnest and vehement desire to obtain grace from God. These things will also kindle in us an ardent longing to pray. Does this feeling flow from the temper natural to man, or does it proceed from the grace of God?

Here God must come to our aid. For we are altogether stupid in regard to both. (Romans 8:2, Romans 8:5.) It is the Spirit of God who excites in us groanings which cannot be uttered, and frames our minds to the desires which are requisite in prayer, as Paul says. (Galatians 4:6.) Is it the meaning of this doctrine, that we are to sit still, and, in a kind of vacillating state, wait for the motions of the Spirit, and not that each one is to urge himself to pray? By no means. The meaning rather is, that when believers feel themselves cold or sluggish, and somewhat indisposed to pray, they should forthwith flee to God, and beseech him to inflame them by the fiery darts of his Spirit, that they may be rendered fit to pray.

You do not, however, mean that there is to be no use of the tongue in prayer Not at all. For it often helps to sustain the mind, and keep it from being so easily drawn off from God. Besides, as it, more than other members, was created to display the glory of God, it is right that it be employed to this purpose, to the whole extent of its capacity. Moreover, vehemence of desire occasionally impels a man to break forth into utterance with the tongue without intending it.

If so, what profit have those who pray in a foreign tongue not understood by them?

It is nothing else than to sport with God. Christians, therefore, should have nothing to do with this hypocrisy. (1 Corinthians 14:15.) But when we pray do we do it fortuitously, uncertain of success, or ought we to feel assured that the Lord will hear us? The foundation of our prayer should always be, that the Lord will hear us, and that we shall obtain whatever we ask, in so far as is for our good. For this reason Paul tells us, that true prayer flows from faith. (Romans 10:14.) For no man will ever duly call upon him, without previously resting with firm reliance on his goodness.

What then will become of those who pray in doubt, and without fixing in their minds what profit they are to gain by praying, nay, are uncertain whether or not their prayers will be heard by God? Their prayers are vain and void, not being supported by any promise. For we are ordered to ask with sure faith, and the promise is added, that whatever we shall ask, believing, we shall receive. (Matthew 21:22; Mark 11:24; James 1:6.)

It remains to be seen wherein we have such great confidence, that while unworthy, on so many accounts, of appearing in the presence of God, we however dare to sist ourselves before him.

First, we have promises by which we must simply abide, without making any reference to our own worthiness. Secondly, if we are sons, God animates and instigates us by his Spirit, so that we doubt not to betake ourselves to him in a familiar manner, as to a father. As we are like worms, and are oppressed by the consciousness of our sins, God, in order that we may not tremble at his glorious majesty, sets forth Christ as a Mediator, through whom we obtain access, and have no doubt at all of obtaining favor. (Psalms 4:15; Psalms 91:15; Psalms 145:18; Isaiah 30:19; Isaiah 65:1; Jeremiah 29:12; Joel 2:32; Romans 8:25; Romans 10:13.) Do you understand that we are to pray to God only in the name of Christ?

I so understand. For it is both so enjoined in distinct terms, and the promise is added, that he will by his intercession obtain what we ask. (1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1.)

He is not then to be accused of rashness or presumption, who, trusting to this Advocate, makes a familiar approach to God, and holds forth to God and to himself Christ as the only one through whom he is to be heard? (Hebrews 4:14.) By no means: For he who thus prays conceives his prayers as it were at the lips of Christ, seeing he knows, that by the intercession of Christ, his prayer is assisted and recommended. (Romans 8:15.)

Let us now consider what the prayers of believers ought to contain. Is it lawful to ask of God whatever comes into our mind, or is a certain rule to be observed?

It were a very preposterous method of prayer to indulge our own desires and the judgment of the flesh. We are too ignorant to be able to judge what is expedient for us, and we labor under an intemperance of desire, to which it is necessary that a bridle be applied.

What then requires to be done? The only thing remaining is for God himself to prescribe a proper form of prayer, that we may follow him while he leads us by the hand, and as it were sets words before us.

What rule has he prescribed? The doctrine on this subject is amply and copiously delivered in the Scriptures. But to give us a surer aim, he framed, and, as it were, dictated a form in which he has briefly comprehended and digested under a few heads whatever it is lawful, and in our interest to ask.

Repeat it. Our Lord Jesus Christ being asked by his disciples in what way they ought to pray, answered, when ye would pray, say ye, (Matthew 6:9; Luke 11:2,) "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen." That we may the better understand what it contains, let us divide it into heads.

It contains six parts, of which the three first respect the glory of God alone as their proper end, without any reference to us: the other three relate to us and our interest. Are we then to ask God for any thing from which no benefit redounds to us?

He indeed of his infinite goodness so arranges all things that nothing tends to his glory without being also salutary to us. Therefore when his name is sanctified, he causes it to turn to our sanctification also; nor does his kingdom come without our being in a manner sharers in it. But in asking all these things, we ought to look only to his glory without thinking of advantage to

ourselves.

According to this view, three of these requests have a connection with our own good, and yet their only aim ought to be, that the name of God may be glorified.

It is so; and thus the; glory of God ought also to be considered in the other three, though they are properly intended to express desire for things which belong to our good and salvation.

Let us now proceed to an explanation of the words; and, first, Why is the name of Father, rather than any other, here given to God? As security of conscience is one of the most essential requisites for praying aright, God assumes this name, which suggests only the idea of pure kindness, that having thus banished all anxiety from our minds, he may invite us to make a familiar approach to him. Shall we then dare to go to him directly without hesitation as children to parents?

Wholly so: nay, with much surer confidence of obtaining what we ask. For as our Master reminds us, (Matthew 7:11,) If we being evil cannot however refuse good things to our children, nor bear to send [hem empty away, nor give them poison for bread, how much greater kindness is to be expected from our heavenly Father, who is not only supremely good, but goodness itself? May we not from this name also draw the inference which we mentioned at the outset, viz., that to be approved, all our prayers should be founded on the intercession of Christ? (John 15:7; Romans 8:15.) And indeed a most valid inference. For God regards us as sons, only in so far as we are members of Christ.⁷⁴ Why do you call God :' our Father" in common, rather than "my Father" in particular?

Each believer may indeed call him his own Father, but the Lord used the common epithet that he might accustom us to exercise charity in our prayers, and that we might not neglect others, by each caring only for himself.

What is meant by the additional clause, that God is in heaven?

It is just the same as if I were to call him exalted, mighty, incomprehensible. To what end this, and for what reason? In this way we are taught when we pray to him to raise our minds aloft, and not have any carnal or earthly thoughts of him, nor measure him by our own little standard, lest thinking too meanly of him, we should wish to bring him into subjection to our will, instead of learning to look up with fear and reverence to his glorious Majesty. It tends to excite and confirm our confidence in him, when he is proclaimed to be the Lord and Governor of heaven, ruling all things at his pleasure.

Repeat to me the substance of the first petition. By the name of God, Scripture denotes the knowledge and fame with which he is celebrated among men. We pray then that his glory' may be promoted everywhere, and in all. But can any thing be added to his glory, or taken from it? In itself it neither increases nor is diminished. But we pray as is meet, that it may be illustrious among men - that in whatever God does, all his works may appear, as they are, glorious, that he himself may by all means be glorified.

What understand you by the kingdom of God in the second petition?

It consists chiefly of two branches - that he would govern the elect by his Spirit - that he would prostrate and destroy the reprobate who refuse to give themselves up to his service, thus making it

manifest that nothing is able to resist his might. In what sense do you pray that this kingdom may come? That the Lord would daily increase the numbers of the faithful - that he would ever and anon load them with new gifts of his Spirit, until he fill them completely: moreover, that he would render his truth more clear and conspicuous by dispelling the darkness of Satan, that he would abolish all iniquity, by advancing his own righteousness. Are not all these things done every day?

They are done so far: that the kingdom of God may be said to be commenced. We pray, therefore, that it may constantly increase and be carried forward, until it attain its greatest height, which we only hope to take place on the last day on which God alone, after reducing all creatures to order, will be exalted and pre-eminent, and so be all in all. (1 Corinthians 15:28.) What mean you by asking that the will of God may be done? That all creatures may be subdued into obedience to him, and so depend on his nod, that nothing may be done except at his pleasure. Do you think then that any thing can be done against his will?

We not only pray that what he has decreed with himself may come to pass, but also that all contumacy being tamed and subjugated, he would subject all wills to his own, and frame them in obedience to it. Do we not by thus praying surrender our own wills?

Entirely: nor do we only pray that he would make void whatever desires of ours are at variance with his own will, but also that he would form in us new minds and new hearts, so that we may wish nothing of ourselves, but rather that his Spirit may preside over our wishes, and bring them into perfect unison with God.

Why do you pray that this may be done on earth as it is in heaven? As the holy angels, who are his celestial creatures, have it as their only object to obey him in all things, to be always obedient to his word, and prepared voluntarily to do him service, we pray for such prompt obedience in men, that each may give himself up entirely to him in voluntary subjection.

Let us now come to the second part. What mean you by the "daily" bread you ask for? In general every thing that tends to the preservation of the present life, not only food or clothing, but also all other helps by which the wants of outward life are sustained; that we may eat our bread in quiet, so far as the Lord knows it to be expedient. But why do you ask God to give what he orders us to provide by our own labor?

Though we are to labor, and even sweat in providing food, we are not nourished either by our own labor, or our own industry, or our own diligence, but by the blessing of God by which the labor of our hands, that would otherwise be in vain, prospers. Moreover we should understand, that even when abundance of food is supplied to our hand, and we eat it, we are not nourished by its substance, but by the virtue of God alone. It has not any inherent efficacy in its own nature, but God supplies it from heaven as the instrument of his own beneficence. (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4.) But by what right do you call it your bread when you ask God to give it?

Because by the kindness of God it becomes ours, though it is by no means due to us. We are also reminded by this term to refrain from counting the bread of others, and to be contented with that which has come to us in a legitimate manner as from the hand of God.

Why do you add both "daily" and "this day?" By these two terms we are taught moderation and temperance, that our wishes may not exceed the measure of necessity. As this prayer ought to be

common to all, how can the rich, who have abundance at home, and have provision laid up for a long period, ask it to be given them for a day? The rich, equally with the poor, should remember that none of the things which they have will do them good, unless God grant them the use of them, and by his grace make the use fruitful and efficacious. Wherefore while possessing all things, we have nothing except in so far as we every hour receive from the hand of God what is necessary and sufficient for us.

What does the fifth petition contain? That the Lord would pardon our sins. Can no mortal be found so righteous as not to require this pardon? Not one. When Christ gave this form of prayer, he designed it for the whole Church. Wherefore he who would exempt himself from this necessity, must leave the society of the faithful. And we have the testimony of Scripture, namely, that he who would contend before God to clear himself in one thing, will be found guilty in a thousand. (Job 9:3.) The only refuge left for all is in his mercy.

How do you think that sins are forgiven us? As the words of Christ express, namely, that they are debts which make us liable, to eternal death, until God of his mere liberality deliver us.

You say then that it is by the free mercy of God that we obtain the pardon of sins?

Entirely so. For were the punishment of only one sin, and that the least, to be ransomed, we could not satisfy it. All then must be freely overlooked and forgiven.

What advantage accrues to us from this forgiveness?

We are accepted, just as if we were righteous and innocent, and at the same time our consciences are confirmed in a full reliance on his paternal favor, assuring us of salvation. Does the appended condition, viz., that he would forgive us as we forgive our debtors, mean that we merit pardon from God by pardoning men who have in any way offended us? By no means. For in this way forgiveness would not be free nor founded alone on the satisfaction which Christ made for us on the cross. But as by forgetting the injuries done to ourselves, we, while imitating his goodness and clemency, demonstrate that we are in fact his children, God wishes us to confirm it by this pledge; and at the same time shows us, on the other hand, that if we do not show ourselves easy and ready to pardon, nothing else is to be expected of him than the highest inexorable rigor of severity. Do you say then that all who cannot from the heart forgive offenses are discarded by God and expunged from his list of children, so that they cannot hope for any place of pardon in heaven? So I think, in accordance with the words, "With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again."

What comes next?

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." Do you include all this in one petition?

It is only one petition; for the latter clause is an explanation of the former.

What does it contain in substance? That the Lord would not permit us to rush or fall into sin - that he would not; leave us to be overcome by the devil and the desires of our flesh, which wage constant war with us - that he would rather furnish us with his strength to resist, sustain us by his hand, cover and fortify us by his protection, so that under his guardianship and tutelage we may dwell safely.

How is this done? When governed by his Spirit we are imbued with such a love and desire of righteousness, as to overcome the flesh, sin, and Satan; and, on the other hand, with such a hatred of sin as may keep us separated from the world in pure holiness. For our victory consists in the power of the Spirit. Have we need of this assistance? Who can dispense with it? The devil is perpetually hovering over us, and going about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8.) And let us consider what our weakness is. Nay, all would be over with us every single moment did not God equip us for battle with his own weapons, and strengthen us with his own hand.

What do you mean by the term Temptation? The tricks and fallacies of Satan, by which he is constantly attacking us, and would forthwith easily circumvent us, were we not aided by the help of God. For both our mind, from its native vanity, is liable to his wiles, and our will, which is always prone to evil, would immediately yield to him. But why do you pray God not to lead you into temptation, which seems to be the proper act of Satan, not of God? As God defends believers by his protection, that they may neither be oppressed by the wiles of Satan, nor overcome by sin, so those whom he means to punish he not only leaves destitute of his grace, but also delivers to the tyranny of Satan, strikes with blindness, and gives over to a reprobate mind, so that they are completely enslaved to sin and exposed to all the assaults of temptation.

What is meant by the clause which is added, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever?"

We are here again reminded that our prayers must lean more on the power and goodness of God than on any confidence in ourselves. Besides, we are taught to close all our prayers with praise. Is it not lawful to ask any thing of God that is not comprehended in this form?

Although we are free to pray in other words, and in another manner, we ought, however, to hold that no prayer can please God which is not referable to this as the only rule of right Prayer.

1545 - (Part 4) - The Word and the Sacraments

OF THE WORD OF GOD.

The order already adopted by us requires that we now consider the fourth part of divine worship,

We said that this consists in acknowledging God as the author of all good, and in extolling his goodness, justice, wisdom, and power with praise and thanksgiving, that thus the glory of all good may remain entirely with him. Has he prescribed no rule as to this part?

All the praises extant in Scripture ought to be our rule. Has the Lord's Prayer nothing which applies here?

Yes. When we pray that his name may be hallowed, we pray that he may be duly glorified in his works - that he may be regarded, whether in pardoning sinners, as merciful; or in exercising vengeance, as just; or in performing his pro-raises, as true: in short, that whatever of his works we see may excite us to glorify him. This is indeed to ascribe to him the praise of all that is good.

What shall we infer from these heads which have hitherto been considered, by us?.

What truth itself teaches, and was stated at the outset, viz., that this is eternal life to know one true God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, (John 17:3,) - to know him, I say, in order that we may pay due honor and worship to him, that he may be not only our Lord but also our Father and Savior, and we be in turn his children and servants, and accordingly devote our lives to the illustration of his glory.

How can we attain to such blessedness? For this end God has left us his holy word; for spiritual doctrine is a kind of door by which we enter his heavenly kingdom. Where are we to seek for this word? In the Holy Scriptures, in which it is contained.

How are you to use it in order to profit by it? By embracing it with entire heartfelt persuasion, as certain truth come down from heaven - by being docile, and subjecting our minds and wills in obedience to it - by loving it sincerely - by having it once for all engraven on our hearts, and there rooted so as to produce fruit in our life - finally, by being formed after its rule. Then shall it turn to our salvation, as it was intended. Are all these things put in our own power?

None of them at all; but every thing which I have mentioned it belongs to God only to effect in us by the gift of his Spirit. But are we not to use diligence, and zealously strive to profit in it by reading, hearing, and meditating?

Yea, verily: seeing that every one ought to exercise himself in the daily reading of it, and all should be especially careful to attend the sermons when the doctrine of salvation is expounded in the assembly of the faithful.

You affirm then that it is not enough for each to read privately at home, and that all ought to meet in common to hear the same doctrine?

They must meet when they can - that is, when an opportunity is given. Are you able to prove this to me? The will of God alone ought to be amply sufficient for proof; and the order which he hath recommended to his church is not what two or three only might observe, but all should obey in common. Moreover, he declares this to be the only method of edifying as well as preserving. This, then, should be a sacred and inviolable rule to us, and no one should think himself entitled to be wise above his Master. Is it necessary, then, that pastors should preside over churches?

Nay; it is necessary to hear them, and listen with fear and reverence to the doctrine of Christ as propounded from their lips. But is it enough for a Christian man to have been instructed by his pastor once, or ought he to observe this course during life?

It is little to have begun, unless you persevere. We must be the disciples of Christ to the end, or rather without end. But he has committed to the ministers of the Church the office of teaching in his name and stead. OF THE SACRAMENTS.

Is there no other medium, as it is called, than the Word by which God may communicate himself to us? To the preaching of the Word he has added the Sacraments.

What is a Sacrament? An outward attestation of the divine benevolence towards us, which, by a visible sign, figures spiritual grace, to seal the promises of God on our hearts, and thereby better confirm their truth to us. Is there such virtue in a visible sign that it can establish our consciences in a full assurance of salvation? This virtue it has not of itself, but by the will of God, because it was instituted for this end.

Seeing it is the proper office of the Holy Spirit to seal the promises of God on our minds, how do you attribute this to the sacraments?

There is a wide difference between him and them. To move and affect the heart, to enlighten the mind, to render the conscience sure and tranquil, truly belongs to the Spirit alone; so that it ought to be regarded as wholly his work, and be ascribed to him alone, that no other may have the praise; but this does not at all prevent God from employing the sacraments as secondary instruments, and applying them to what use he deems proper, without derogating in any respect from the agency of the Spirit.

You think, then. that the power and efficacy of a sacrament is not contained in the outward element, but flows entirely from the Spirit of God?

I think so; viz., that the Lord hath been pleased to exert his energy by his instruments, this being the purpose to which he destined them: this he does without detracting in any respect from the virtue of his Spirit. Can you give me a reason why he so acts? In this way he consults our weakness. If we were wholly spiritual, we might, like the angels, spiritually behold both him and his grace; but as we are surrounded with this body of clay, we need figures or mirrors to exhibit a view of spiritual and heavenly things in a kind of earthly manner; for we could not otherwise attain to them. At the same time, it is our interest to have all our senses exercised in the promises of God, that they may be the better confirmed to us.

If it is true that the sacraments were instituted by God to be helps to our necessity, is it not arrogance for any one to hold that he can dispense with them as unnecessary?

It certainly is; and hence, if any one of his own accord abstains from the use of them, as if he had no need of them, he contemns Christ, spurns his grace, and quenches the Spirit. But what confidence can there be in the sacraments as a means of establishing the conscience, and what certain security can be conceived from things which the good and bad use indiscriminately?

Although the wicked: so to speak, annihilate the gifts of God offered in the sacraments in so far as regards themselves, they do not thereby' deprive the sacraments of their nature and virtue.

How, then, and when does the effect follow the use of the sacraments? When we receive them in faith, seeking Christ alone and his grace in them.

Why do you say that Christ is to be sought in them?

I mean that we are not to cleave to the visible signs so as to seek salvation from them, or imagine that the power of conferring grace is either fixed or included in them, but rather that the sign is to be used as a help, by which, when seeking salvation and complete felicity, we are pointed directly to Christ.

Seeing that faith is requisite for the use of them, how do you say that they are given us to confirm our faith, to make us more certain of the promises of God?

It is by no means sufficient that faith is once begun in us. It must be nourished continually, and increase more and more every day. To nourish, strengthen, and advance it, the Lord instituted the sacraments. This indeed Paul intimates, when he says that they have the effect of sealing the promises of God. (Romans 4:11.) But is it not an indication of unbelief not to have entire faith in the promises of God until they are confirmed to us from another source?

It certainly argues a weakness of faith under which the children of God labor. They do not, however, cease to be believers, though the faith with which they are endued is still small and imperfect; for as long as we continue in this world remains of distrust cleave to our flesh, and these there is no other way of shaking off than by making continual progress even unto the end. It is therefore always necessary to be going forward.

How many are the sacraments of the Christian Church?

There are only two, whose use is common among all believers.

What are they?

Baptism and the Holy Supper.

What likeness or difference is there between them?

Baptism is a kind! of entrance into the Church; for we have in it a testimony that we who are otherwise strangers and aliens, are received, into the family of God, so as to be counted of his household; on the other hand, the Supper attests that God exhibits himself to us by nourishing our souls. That the meaning of both may be more clear to us, let us treat of them separately. First, what is the meaning of Baptism?

It consists of two parts. For, first, Forgiveness of sins; and, secondly, Spiritual regeneration, is figured by it. (Ephesians 5:26; Romans 6:4) What resemblance has water with these things, so as

to represent them?

Forgiveness of sins is a kind of washing, by which our souls are cleansed from their defilements, just as bodily stains are washed away by water.

What do you say of Regeneration?

Since the mortification of our nature is its beginning, and our becoming' new creatures its end, a figure of death is set before us when the water is poured upon the head, and the figure of a new life when instead of remaining immersed under water, we only enter it for a moment as a kind of grave, out of which we instantly emerge. Do you think that the water is a washing' of the soul? By no means; for it were impious to snatch away this honor from the blood of Christ, which was shed in order to wipe away all our stains; and render us pure and unpolluted in the sight of God. (1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 1:7.) And we receive the fruit of this cleansing when the Holy Spirit sprinkles our consciences with that sacred blood. Of this we have a seal in the Sacrament. But do you attribute nothing more to the water than that it is a figure of ablution?

I understand it to be a figure, but still so that the reality is annexed to it; for God does not disappoint us when he promises us his gifts. Accordingly, it is certain that both pardon of sins and newness of life are offered to us in baptism, and received by us. Is this grace bestowed on all indiscriminately?

Many precluding its entrance by their depravity, make it void to themselves. Hence the benefit extends to believers only, and yet the Sacrament loses nothing of its nature.

Whence is Regeneration derived? From the Death and Resurrection of Christ taken together. His death hath this efficacy, that by means of it our old man is crucified, and the vitiosity of our nature in a manner buried, so as no more to be in rigor in us. Our reformation to a new life, so as to obey the righteousness of God, is the result of the resurrection.

How are these blessings bestowed upon us by Baptism?

If we do not render the promises there offered unfruitful by rejecting them, we are clothed with Christ, and presented with his Spirit.

What must we do in order to use Baptism duly? The right use of Baptism consists in faith and repentance; that is, we must first hold with a firm heartfelt reliance that, being purified from all stains by the blood of Christ, we are pleasing to God: secondly, we must feel his Spirit dwelling in us, and declare this to others by our actions, and we must constantly exercise ourselves in aiming at the mortification of our flesh, and obedience to the righteousness of God.

If these things are requisite to the legitimate use of Baptism, how comes it that we baptize Infants?

It is not necessary that faith and repentance should always precede baptism. They are only required from those whose age makes them capable of both. It will be sufficient, then, if, after infants have grown up, they exhibit the power of their baptism. Can you demonstrate by reason that there is nothing absurd in this?

Yes; if it be conceded to me that our Lord instituted nothing at variance with reason. For while Moses and all the Prophets teach that circumcision was a sign of repentance, and was even as

Paul declares the sacrament of faith, we see that infants were not excluded from it. (Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; Romans 4:11.) But are they now admitted to Baptism for the same reason that was valid in circumcision? The very same, seeing that the promises which God anciently gave to the people of Israel are now published through the whole world. But do you infer from thence that the sign also is to be used?

He who will duly ponder all things in both ordinances, will perceive this to follow. Christ in making us partakers of his grace, which had been formerly bestowed on Israel, did not condition, that it should either be more obscure or in some respect less abundant. Nay, rather he shed it upon as both more clearly and more abundantly. Do you think that if infants are denied baptism, some thing is thereby deducted from the grace of God, and it must be said to have been diminished by the coming of Christ? That indeed is evident; for the sign being taken away, which tends very much to testify the mercy of God and confirm the promises, we should want an admirable consolation which those of ancient times enjoyed. Your view then is, that since God, under the Old Testament, in order to show himself the Father of infants, was pleased that the promise, of salvation should be engraven on their bodies by a visible sign, it were unbecoming to suppose that, since the advent of Christ, believers have less to confirm them, God having intended to give us in the present day the same promise which was anciently given to the Fathers, and exhibited in Christ a clearer specimen of his goodness. That is my view. Besides, while it is sufficiently clear that the force, and so to speak, the substance of Baptism are common to children, to deny them the sign, which is inferior to the substance, were manifest injustice. On what terms then are children to be baptized? To attest that they are heirs of the blessing promised to the seed of believers, and enable them to receive and produce the fruit of their Baptism, on acknowledging its reality after they have grown up.

Let us now pass to the Supper. And, first, I should like to know from you what its meaning is.

It was instituted by Christ in order that by the communication of his body and blood, he might teach and assure us that our souls are being trained in the hope of eternal life. But why is the body of our Lord figured by bread, and his blood by wine?

We are hence taught that such virtue as bread has in nourishing our bodies to sustain the present life, the same has the body of our Lord spiritually to nourish our souls. As by wine the hearts of men are gladdened, their strength recruited, and the whole man strengthened, so by the blood of our Lord the same benefits are received by our souls. Do we therefore eat the body and blood of the Lord?

I understand so. For as our whole reliance for salvation depends on him, in order that the obedience which he yielded to the Father may be imputed to us just as if it were ours, it is necessary that he be possessed by us; for the only way in which he communicates his blessings to us is by making himself ours. But did he not give himself when he exposed himself to death, that he might redeem us from the sentence of death, and reconcile us to God? That is indeed true; but it is not enough for us unless we now receive him, that thus the efficacy and fruit of his death may reach us. Does not the manner of receiving consist in faith?

I admit it does. But I at the same time add, that this is done when we not only believe that he died in order to free us from death, and was raised up that he might purchase life for us, but recognize

that he dwells in us, and that we are united to him by a union the same in kind as that which unites the members to the head, that by virtue of this union we may become partakers of all his blessings. Do we obtain this communion by the Supper alone?

No, indeed. For by the gospel also, as Paul declares, Christ is communicated to us. And Paul justly declares this, seeing we are there told that we are flesh of his flesh and bones of his bones - that he is the living bread which came down from heaven to nourish our souls - that we are one with him as he is one with the Father, etc. (1 Corinthians 1:6; Ephesians 5:30; John 6:51; John 17:21.) What more do we obtain from the sacrament, or what other benefit does it confer upon us? The communion of which I spoke is thereby confirmed and increased; for although Christ is exhibited to us both in baptism and in the gospel, we do not however receive him entire, but in part only.

What then have we in the symbol of bread? As the body of Christ was once sacrificed for us to reconcile us to God, so now also is it given to us, that we may certainly know that reconciliation belongs to us.

What in the symbol of wine? That as Christ once shed his blood for the satisfaction of our sins, and as the price of our redemption, so he now also gives it to us to drink, that we may feel the benefit which should thence accrue to us.

According to these two answers, the holy Supper of the Lord refers us to his death, that we may communicate in its virtue?

Wholly so; for that the one perpetual sacrifice, sufficient for our salvation, was performed. Hence nothing more remains for us but to enjoy it. The Supper then was not instituted in order to offer up to God the body of his Son? By no means. He, himself alone, as priest for ever, has this privilege; and so his words express when he says, "Take, eat." He there commands us not to offer his body, but only to eat it. (Hebrews 5:10; Matthew 26:26.) Why do we use two signs?

Therein the Lord consulted our weakness, teaching us in a more familiar manner that he is not only food to our souls, but drink also, so that we are not to seek any part of spiritual life anywhere else than in him alone.

Ought all without exception to use both alike? So the commandment of Christ bears: and to derogate from it in any way, by attempting anything contrary to it, is wicked. Have we in the Supper only a figure of the benefits which you have mentioned, or are they there exhibited to us in reality?

Seeing that our Lord Jesus Christ is truth itself, there cannot, be a doubt that he at the same time fulfills the promises which he there gives us, and adds the reality to the figures. Wherefore I doubt not that as he testifies by words and signs, so he also makes us partakers of his substance, that thus we may have one life with him. But how can this be, when the body of Christ is in heaven, and we are still pilgrims on the earth? This he accomplishes by the secret and miraculous agency of his Spirit, to whom it is not difficult to unite things otherwise disjoined by a distant space.

You do not imagine then, either that the body is inclosed in the bread or the blood in the wine?

Neither is inclosed. My understanding rather is, that in order to obtain the reality of the signs, our minds must be raised to heaven, where Christ is, and from whence we expect him as Judge and Redeemer, and that it is improper and vain to seek him in these earthly elements. To collect the substance of what you have said, you maintain that there are two things in the Supper, viz., bread and wine, which are seen by the eyes, handled by the hands, and perceived by the taste, and Christ by whom our souls are inwardly fed as with their own proper ailment?

True; and so much so that the resurrection of the body also is there confirmed to us by a kind of pledge, since the body also shares in the symbol of life.

What is the right and legitimate use of this Sacrament? That which Paul points out, "Let a man examine himself," before he approach to it. (1 Corinthians 11:28.) Into what is he to inquire in this examination?

Whether he be a true member of Christ. By what evidence may he come to know this?

If he is endued with faith and repentance, if he entertains sincere love for his neighbor, if he has his mind pure from all hatred and malice. Do you require that a man's faith and charity should both be perfect?

Both should be entire and free from all hypocrisy, but it were vain to demand an absolute perfection to which nothing should be wanting, seeing that none such will ever be found in man.

Then the imperfection under which we still labor does not forbid our approach? On the contrary, were we perfect, the Supper would no longer be of any use to us. It should be a help to aid our weakness, and a support to our imperfection. Is no other end besides proposed by these two Sacraments?

They are also martyrs and as it were badges of our profession. For by the use of them we profess our faith before men, and testify our consent in the religion of Christ. Were any one to despise the use of them, in what light should it be regarded? As an indirect denial of Christ. Assuredly such a person, inasmuch as he deigns not to confess himself a Christian, deserves not to be classed among Christians. Is it enough to receive both once in a lifetime?

It is enough so to receive baptism, which may not be repeated. It is different with the Supper.

What is the difference? By baptism the Lord adopts us and brings us into his Church, so as thereafter to regard us as part of his household. After he has admitted us among the number of his people, he testifies by the Supper that he takes a continual interest in nourishing us. Does the administration both of baptism and of the Supper belong indiscriminately to all? By no means. It is confined to those to whom the office of teaching has been committed. For the two things, viz., to feed the Church with the doctrine of piety and administer the sacrament, are united together by an indissoluble tie. Can you prove this to me by the testimony of Scripture?

Christ gave special commandment to the Apostles to baptize. In the celebration of the Supper he ordered us to follow his example. And the Evangelists relate that he himself in dispensing it, performed the office of a public minister. (Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19.) But ought pastors, to whom the dispensing of it has been committed, to admit all indiscriminately without selection? In regard to baptism, as it is now bestowed only on infants, there is no room for discrimination; but in the

Supper the minister ought to take heed not to give it to any one who is clearly unworthy of receiving it.

Why so?

Because it cannot be done without insulting and profaning the Sacrament. But did not Christ admit Judas, impious though he was, to the Communion?

I admit it; as his impicity was still secret. For though it was not unknown to Christ, it had not come to light or the knowledge of men. (Matthew 26:25.) What then can be done with hypocrites? The pastor cannot keep them back as unworthy, but must wait till such time as he shall reveal their iniquity, and make it manifest to all. But if he knows or has been warned that an individual is unworthy?

Even that would not be sufficient to keep him back from communicating, unless in addition to it there was a legitimate investigation and decision of the Church.

It is of importance, then, that there should be a certain order of government established in churches?

It is: they cannot otherwise be well managed or duly constituted. The method is for elders to be chosen to preside as censors of manners, to guard watchfully against offenses, and exclude from communion all whom they recognize to be unfit for it, and who could not be admitted without profaning the Sacrament.

1560 - (Part 1) - Faith

A Reformulated Catechism taken from the Geneva Catechism circa 1560 A Dialogue between the Minister and the child. by John Calvin

1. Faith 1. Minister. What is the chief end of human life? To know God.

2. Why do you say that?

Because He created us and placed us in this world to be glorified in us. And it is indeed right that our life, of which He Himself is the beginning, should be devoted to His glory.

3. What is the sovereign good of man? The same thing.

4. Why do you hold that to be the sovereign good?

Because without it our condition is more miserable than that of brute-beasts.

5. Hence, then, we see that nothing worse can happen to a man than to live without God.

It is Song of Solomon 6:1-13. What is the true and right knowledge of God? When we know Him in order that we may honour Him.

7. How do we honour Him aright?

We put our reliance on Him, by serving Him in obedience to His will, by calling upon Him in all our need, seeking salvation and every good thing in Him, and acknowledging with heart and mouth that all our good proceeds from Him.

8. To consider these things in order, and explain them more fully---what is the first point? To rely upon God.

9. How can we do that?

First by knowing Him as almighty and perfectly good.

10. Is this enough?

No.

11. Why?

Because we are unworthy that He should show His power in helping us, or employ His goodness toward us.

12. What more then is required? That we be certain that He loves us, and desires to be our Father, and Saviour.

13. How do we know that? By His Word, in which He declares His mercy to us in Christ, and assures us of His love toward us.

14. Then the foundation for true reliance upon God is to know Him in Jesus Christ [John 17:3]? That is true.

15. What then briefly is the substance of this knowledge?

It is contained in the Confession of Faith used by all Christians. It is commonly called the Apostles' Creed, because it is a summary of the true faith which has always been held in Christ's Church, and was derived from the pure doctrine of the Apostles.

16. Recite it.

17. In order to expound this confession in detail, into how many parts do we divide it?

Into four principal parts.

18. What are they? The first is about God the Father; the second about His Son Jesus Christ, which also includes the whole history of our redemption; the third is about the Holy Spirit; the fourth is about the Church, and the gracious gifts of God conferred on her.

19. Since there is but one God, why do you mention the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are three?

Because in the one essence of God, we have to look on the Father as the beginning and origin, and the first cause of all things; then the Son, who is Eternal Wisdom; and the Holy Spirit who is His virtue and power shed abroad over all creatures, but still perpetually resident in Himself.

20. You mean then that there is no objection to our understanding that these three persons are distinctly in one Godhead, that therefore God is not therefore divided?

Just Song of Solomon 21. Now repeat the first part.

"I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

22. Why do you call Him Father?

It is with reference to Christ who is His eternal Word, begotten of Him before time, and being sent into this world was demonstrated and declared to be His Son. But since God is the Father of Jesus Christ, it follows that He is our Father also.

23. In what sense do you mean that He is Almighty? That does not mean that He has a power which He does not exercise, but that He disposes all things by His Providence, governs the world by His will, ruling all as it seems good to Him.

24. You mean that the power of God is not idle, but consider rather that His hand is always engaged in working, so that nothing is done except through Him, with His permission and His decree.

It is Song of Solomon 25. Why do you add that He is Creator of heaven and earth?

Because He has manifested Himself to us by works [Psalms 104:1-35; Romans 1:20] we ought to seek Him in them. Our mind cannot comprehend His essence. But the world is for us like a mirror in which we may contemplate Him in so far as it is expedient for us to know Him.

26. Do you not understand by "heaven and earth" all other creatures?

Yes indeed; under these two words all are included, because they are all heavenly and earthly.

27. But why do you call God a Creator only, seeing that it is much more to uphold and preserve creatures in their state, than to have once created them? This term does not signify that God brought His works into being at a single stroke, and then left them without a care for them. We ought rather to understand, that as the world was made by God in the beginning, so now it is preserved by Him in its estate, so that the heavens, the earth and all creatures do not continue in their being apart from this power. Besides, seeing that He holds all things in His hand, it follows that the government and lordship over them belongs to Him. Therefore, in that He is Creator of heaven and earth, it is His to rule the whole order of nature by His goodness and power and wisdom. It is He who sends rain and drought, hail, tempest and fair weather, fruitfulness and barrenness, health and sickness. In short, all things are under His command, to serve Him as it seems good to Him.

28. But what about wicked men and devils? Are they also subject to Him?

Although He does not guide them by His Holy Spirit, nevertheless He curbs them by His power, so that they cannot budge unless He permits them. He even constrains them to execute His will, although it is against their own intention and purpose.

29. What good do you derive from the knowledge of this fact?

Very Much. It would go ill with us if devils and wicked men had power to do anything in spite of the will of God. Moreover we could never be at rest in our minds if we were exposed to them in danger, but when we know that they are curbed by the will of God, so that they can do nothing without His permission, then we may rest and breathe again, for God has promised to protect and defend us.

30. Let us now come to the second part.

"And in Jesus Christ His only Son our Lord", etc.

31. What briefly does it comprehend? That we acknowledge the Son of God as our Saviour, and the means by which He has redeemed us from death, and acquired salvation.

32. What is the meaning of the name Jesus which you give to Him?

It means Saviour, and was given to Him by the angel at the command of God (Matthew 1:21).

33. Is this of more importance than if men had given it?

Oh, yes. For since God wills that He be called so, He must be so in truth.

34. What, next, is meant by the name of Christ? By this title His office is still better expressed---for it signifies that He was appointed by the Father to be ordained King, Priest, and Prophet.

35. How do you know that?

Because according to the Scripture, anointing is used for these three things. Also, because they are attributed to Him many times.

36. But with what kind of oil was He anointed? Not with visible oil as was used for ancient kings, priests, and prophets, but this anointing was by the grace of the Holy Spirit, who is the reality signified by that outward anointing made in time past (Isaiah 61:1, Psalms 45:7).

37. But what is this Kingdom of which you speak?

It is spiritual, and consists in the Word and Spirit of God, and includes righteousness and life.

38. What of the priesthood?

It is the office and prerogative of presenting Himself before God to obtain grace and favour, and appease His wrath in offering a sacrifice which is acceptable to Him.

39. In what sense do you call Christ a Prophet?

Because on coming down into the world (Isaiah 7:14) He was the sovereign messenger and ambassador of God His Father, to give full exposition of God's will toward the world and so put an end to all prophecies and revelations (Hebrews 1:2).

. But do you derive any benefit from this?

All this is for our good. For Jesus Christ has received all these gifts in order that He may communicate them to us, and that all of us may receive out of His fullness.

41. Expound this to me more fully.

He received the Holy Spirit in full perfection with all His graces, that He may lavish them upon us and distribute them, each according to the measure and portion which the Father knows to be expedient (Ephesians 4:7). Thus we may draw from Him as from a fountain all the spiritual blessings we possess.

42. What does His Kingdom minister to us? By it, we are set at liberty in our conscience and are filled with His spiritual riches in order to live in righteousness and holiness, and we are also armed with power to overcome the devil, the flesh, and the world---the enemies of our souls.

43. What about His priesthood?

First, by means of it He is the Mediator who reconciles us to God His Father; and secondly, through Him we have access to present ourselves to God, and offer Him ourselves in sacrifice with all that belongs to us. And in this way we are companions of His priesthood.

44. There remains His Prophetic Office.

Since this office was given to the Lord Jesus to be the Master and Teacher of His own, its end is to bring us the true knowledge of the Father and of His Truth, so that we may be scholars in the household of God.

45. You would conclude, then, that the title of Christ includes three offices which God has given His Son, in order to communicate virtue and fruit to His faithful people? That is Song of Solomon

46. Why do you call Him the only Son of God, seeing that God calls us all His children?

We are children of God not by nature, but only by adoption and by grace, in that God wills to regard us as such (Ephesians 1:5). But the Lord Jesus who was begotten of the substance of His Father, and is of one essence with Him, is rightly called the only Son of God (John 1:14; Hebrews 1:2) for there is no other who is God's Son by nature.

47. You mean to say, then, that this honour is proper to Him alone, and belongs to Him by nature, but is communicated to us through a gracious gift, in that we are His numbers. That is so. Hence in regard to this communication He is called elsewhere "the First-born among many brethren" (Romans 8:29; Colossians 1:15).

48. How is He "our Lord"?

Because He is appointed by the Father to have us under His government, to administer the Kingdom and the Lordship of God in heaven and on earth, and to be the Head of men and believers (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18).

49. What is meant by what follows?

It declares how the Son of God was anointed by the Father to be our Saviour. That is to say, He assumed human flesh, and accomplished all things necessary to our salvation, as enunciated here.

50. What do you mean by the two clauses, "Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary"? That He was formed in womb of the Virgin Mary, of her proper substance, to be the seed of David, as had been foretold (Psalms 132:11), and yet that this was wrought by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, without the cooperation of a man (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:35).

51. Was it then required that He should put on our very flesh?

Yes, because it was necessary that the disobedience committed by man against God should be redressed in human nature. And moreover He could not otherwise be our Mediator to reconcile us to God His Father (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:15).

52. You say that Christ had to become man, to fulfill the office of Saviour, as in our very person.

Yes, indeed. For we must recover in Him all that we lack in ourselves, and this cannot be done in any other way.

53. But why was that effected by the Holy Spirit, and not by the work of man according to the order of nature? As the seed of man is in itself corrupt, it was necessary that the power of the Holy Spirit should intervene in this conception, in order to preserve our Lord from all corruption, and to fill Him with holiness.

54. Thus we are shown that He who is to sanctify others was free from every stain, and from His mother's womb He was consecrated to God in purity from the very beginning, in order that He may not be subject to the universal corruption of the human race. So I understand it.

55. Why do you go immediately from His birth to His death, passing over the whole history of His life?

Because nothing is said here about what belongs properly to the substance of our redemption.

56. Why is it not said simply and in a word that He died while Pontius Pilate is spike of, under whom He suffered? That is not only to make us certain of the history, but is also meant to signify that His death involved condemnation.

57. How is that?

He died to suffer the punishment due to us, and thus to deliver us from it. However, because we were guilty before the judgment of God as evil-doers, in order to represent us in person He was pleased to appear before the tribunal of an earthly judge, and to be condemned by his mouth, that we might be acquitted before the throne of the celestial Judges 58. But Pilate pronounced Him innocent, and therefore did not condemn Him as if He were worthy of death (Matthew 27:24; Luke 23:14).

Both were involved. He was justified by the testimony of the judge, to show that He did not suffer for His own unworthiness but for ours and yet He was solemnly condemned by the sentence of the same judge, to show that He is truly our surety, receiving condemnation for us in order to acquit us from it.

59. That is well said, for if He had been a sinner He could not have suffered death for others; and yet in order that His condemnation might be our deliverance, He had to be reckoned among transgressors (Isaiah 53:12).

I understand Song of Solomon 60. Is there greater importance in His having been crucified than if He had been put death in another way?

Yes, as Paul also shows us when he says that He hanged on a tree to take our curse upon Himself and acquit us of it (Galatians 3:13). For that kind of death was accursed of God (Deuteronomy 21:23).

61. What? Is it not to dishonour the Lord Jesus, to say He was subjected to the curse, and that before God? By no means, for in taking it upon Himself He abolished it, by His power, yet in such a way that He did not cease to be blessed throughout in order that He might fill us with His blessing.

62. Explain the rest.

Since death was the curse on man as a result of sin, Jesus Christ has endured it, and in enduring it overcame it. And to show that He underwent a real death, He chose to be placed in the tomb like other men.

63. But nothing seems to redound to us from this victory, since we do not cease to die. That is no obstacle. The death of believers is nothing else than a way of entering into a better life.

64. Hence it follows that we ought no longer to dread death as if it were a fearful thing, but we should willingly follow Jesus Christ our Head and Captain, who precedes us, not in order to let us perish, but in order to save us. That is Song of Solomon 65. What is the meaning of the additional clause: "He descended into hell"? That He not only suffered natural death, which is the separation of the body from the soul, but also that His soul was pierced with amazing anguish, which St. Peter calls the pains of death (Acts 2:24).

66. Why and how did that happen to Him?

Because He presented Himself to God in order to make satisfaction in the name of sinners, it was necessary that He should suffer fearful distress of conscience, as if He had been forsaken by God, and even as if God had become hostile to Him. It was in this extremity that He cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matthew 27:46; Mark 15:34).

67. Was His Father then opposed to Him?

No. But He had to be afflicted in this way in fulfillment of what had been foretold by Isaiah, that "he was smitten by the hand of God for our sins and wounded for our transgressions" (Isaiah 53:5; 1 Peter 2:24).

68. But since He is God Himself, how could He be in such dread, as if He were forsaken by God?

We must hold that it was according to His human nature that He was in that extremity: and that in order to allow this, His Deity held itself back a little, as if concealed, that is, did not show its power.

69. How is it possible that Jesus Christ, who is the salvation of the world, should have been under such damnation?

He was not to remain under it. For though He experienced the horror we have spoken of, He was by no means oppressed by it. On the contrary, He battled with the power of hell, to break and destroy it.

70. Thus we see the difference between the torment which He suffered and that which sinners experience when God punishes them in His wrath. For what He suffered for a time in Himself is perpetual in the others, and what was only a needle to sting Him is to them a sword to deliver a mortal wound.

It is so, for Jesus Christ, even in the midst of such distress, did not cease to hope in God. But sinners whom God condemns rush into despair, defy, and even blaspheme Him.

71. May we not gather from this what fruit we receive from the death of Jesus Christ?

Yes, indeed. And, first, we see that it is a sacrifice by which He has made satisfaction for us before the judgment of God, and so has appeased the wrath of God and reconciled us to Him. Secondly, that His blood is the laver by which our souls are cleansed from all stains. Finally, that by this death our sins are effaced, so as never to be remembered before God, and thus the debt which was against us is abolished.

72. Do we not have any other benefit from it?

Yes, we do. If we are true members of Christ, our old man is crucified, our flesh is mortified, so that evil desires no longer reign in us.

73. Expound the next article. This is: "On the third day He rose again from the dead." By this He declared Himself the conqueror of death and sin, for by His resurrection He swallowed up death, broke the fetters of the devil, and destroyed all his powers (1 Peter 3:22).

74. In how many ways does this resurrection benefit us?

First, by its righteousness was fully acquired for us. Secondly, it is also a sure pledge to us that we shall rise again one day in immortal glory (1 Corinthians 15:20-23). Thirdly, if we truly participate in His resurrection, even now we are raised in newness of life, to serve God and to live a holy life according to His pleasure (Romans 6:4).

75. Continue.

"He ascended into heaven."

76. Did He ascend in such a way that He is no longer on earth?

Yes. For after He had performed all that He was enjoined by the Father, and was required for our salvation, there was no need for Him to remain on earth.

77. What benefit do we obtain from this ascension? The benefit is twofold. For inasmuch as Jesus Christ entered heaven in our name, as He had descended for our sake, He has given us an entry, and assured us that the door, previously shut because of sin, is now open for us (Romans 6:8-11). Secondly, He appears before the face of the Father as our Intercessor and Advocate (Hebrews 7:25).

78. But did Christ in going to heaven withdraw from us, in such a way that He has now ceased to be with us?

No. On the contrary, He has promised that He will be with us to the end (Matthew 28:20).

79. Is it in bodily presence that He remains with us?

No, for it is one thing to speak of His body which was taken up into heaven, and another to speak of His power, which is spread abroad everywhere (Luke 24:51; Acts 2:33).

80. How do you understand that He "sitteth on the right hand of the Father?"

It means that He has received the dominion of heaven and earth, so that He reigns and rules over all (Matthew 28:18).

81. But what is meant by "right hand", and by "sitteth"?

It is a similitude taken from earthly princes, who are wont to place on their right hand those whom they make their lieutenants to govern in their name.

82. You do not mean anything more than Paul when he says that Christ had been appointed Head of the Church, and raised above all principality, has secured a Name which is above every name (Ephesians 1:22; Ephesians 4:15; Philippians 2:9). That is Song of Solomon 83. Continue.

"From thence He will come to judge the quick and the dead." That is to say, He will appear again from heaven in judgment, as He was seen to ascend (Acts 1:11).

84. As the judgment is not to be before the end of the world, how do you say that some men will then be alive, and thus will be dead, seeing it is appointed to all men once to die? (Hebrews 9:27-28).

Paul answers this question when he says, that those who then survive will suddenly be changed so that their corruption will be abolished, and their bodies will put on incorruption (1 Corinthians 15:52; 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

85. You understand then that this change will be for them like a death, for it will abolish their first nature, and raise them up in a new state. That is it.

86. Does the fact that Christ is to come gain to judge the world bring us any consolation?

Yes, indeed. For we are certain that He will appear only for our salvation.

87. We should not then fear the last judgment, and have a horror of it?

No, since we are not to come before any other judge than He who is our Advocate, and who has taken our cause in hand to defend us.

88. Let us come now to the third part. This is faith in the Holy Spirit.

89. What do we gain by it? The knowledge that as God has redeemed and saved us by Jesus Christ, He will also make us partakers of this redemption and salvation, through His Holy Spirit.

90. How? As the blood of Christ is our cleansing, the Holy Spirit must sprinkle our consciences with it that they may be cleansed (1 Peter 1:19).

91. This requires a clearer explanation.

I mean that the Holy Spirit, while He dwells in our hearts, makes us feel the virtue of our Lord Jesus (Romans 5:5). For He enlightens us to know His benefits; He seals and imprints them in our souls, and makes room for them in us (Ephesians 1:13). He regenerates us and makes us new creatures, so that through Him we receive all the blessings and gifts which are offered to us in Jesus Christ.

92. What follows? The fourth part, where it is said that we believe in the Catholic Church.

93. What is the Catholic Church? The community of the faithful which God has ordained and elected to eternal life.

94. Is it necessary to believe this article?

Yes, indeed, unless we want to make the death of Christ of none effect, and all that has already been said. The fruit that proceeds from it is the Church.

95. You mean then that up to this point we have spoken of the cause and foundation of salvation, how God has received us in love through the mediation of Jesus, and has confirmed this grace in us through His Holy Spirit. But now the effect and fulfillment of all this is explained in order to give us greater certainty.

It is Song of Solomon 96. In what sense do you call the Church holy?

All whom God has chosen He justifies, and reforms to holiness and innocence, that His glory may be reflected in them (Romans 8:30). And so Jesus Christ sanctified the Church which He redeemed, that it might be glorious and without blemish (Ephesians 5:25-27).

97. What is meant by the word Catholic or Universal?

It is meant to signify, that there is only one Head of the faithful, so they must all be united in one body, so that there are not several churches but one only, which is extended throughout the whole world (Ephesians 4:15; 1 Corinthians 12:12 and 27).

98. And what is the meaning of what follows concerning the communion of saints? That is added to express more clearly the unity which exists among the members of the Church. Moreover by this we are given to understand, that all the benefits that the Lord gives to the Church, are for the good and salvation of every Church, because they all have communion together.

99. But is this holiness which you attribute to the Church already perfect? Not as long as she battles in this world, for elements of imperfection always remain and will never be entirely removed, until she is united completely to Jesus Christ her Head, by whom she is sanctified.

100. Can this Church be known in any other way than by believing in her?

There is indeed the visible Church of God, for the recognition of which He has certain signs, but here we speak properly of the fellowship of those whom He has elected to salvation which cannot be seen plainly by the eye.

101. What comes next?

I believe in "the forgiveness of sins".

102. What do you understand by this word "forgiveness"? That God by His pure goodness forgives and pardons the sins of believers, so that they are not brought to account before His judgment, in order to be punished.

103. Hence it follows that it is not at all through our own satisfaction that we desire to have God's pardon? That is true; for the Lord Jesus has made payment and born the punishment. We on our part could not make any recompense to God, but may only receive pardon for all our misdeeds through the pure generosity of God.

104. Why do you insert this article after the Church?

Because no man obtains pardon for his sins without being previously incorporated into the people of God, persevering in unity and communion with the Body of Christ in such a way as to be a true member of the Church.

105. And so outside the Church there is nothing but damnation and death?

Certainly, for all those who separate themselves from the community of the faithful to form a sect on its own, have no hope of salvation so long as they are in schism.

106. What follows?

I believe in "the resurrection of the flesh and the life everlasting".

107. Why is this article inserted? To show us that our happiness is not situated on the earth. This serves a two-fold end. We are to learn to pass through this world as though it were a foreign country, treating lightly all earthly things and declining to set our hearts on them. Secondly, we are

not to lose courage, no matter how much we fail to perceive as yet the fruit of the grace which the Lord has wrought for us in Jesus Christ, but wait patiently until the time of Revelation 108. How will this resurrection take place?

Those who were formerly dead will resume their bodies, but with another quality; that is, they will no longer be subject to death or corruption, even although their substance will remain the same. Those who will survive God will miraculously raise up through a sudden change, as it is said (1 Corinthians 15:52).

109. Will this resurrection not be common to the evil and the good?

Yes indeed, but not in the same way. Some will rise to salvation and joy, others to condemnation and death (John 5:29; Matthew 25:46).

110. Why then is eternal life only spoken of here, and hell not at all?

Because nothing is set down in this summary that does not tend to the consolation of faithful consciences. It relates to us only the benefits which God performs for His servants. Accordingly no mention is made of the wicked, who are excluded from His Kingdom.

111. Since we have the foundation on which faith is laid, we should be quite able to gather from it what true faith is.

Yes, indeed, It is a sure and steadfast knowledge of the love of God toward us, according as He declares in His gospel that He is our Father and Saviour (through the mediation of Jesus Christ).

112. Can we have this by ourselves, or does it come from God?

Scripture teaches that it is the singular gift of the Holy Spirit, and experience also demonstrates it.

113. How so? Our mind is too weak to comprehend the spiritual wisdom of God which is revealed to us by faith, and our hearts are too prone either to defiance or to a perverse confidence in ourselves or creaturely things. But the Holy Spirit enlightens us to make us capable of understanding what would otherwise be incomprehensible to us, and fortifies us in certitude, sealing and imprinting the promises of salvation on our hearts.

114. What good comes to us from this faith, when we have it?

It justifies us before God, and makes us obtain eternal life.

115. How so? Is not man justified by good works in a holy life and in conformity to God?

If any one be found so perfect, he might well be deemed righteous, but since we are all poor sinners, we must look elsewhere for a worthiness in which to make answer before the judgment of God.

116. But are all our works so reprobate that they cannot merit grace before God?

First, all that we do of ourselves, by our own nature, is vicious, and therefore cannot please God. He condemns them all.

117. You say then that before God has received us in His grace, we can nothing but sin, just as a bad tree cannot but produce bad fruit? (Matthew 7:17).

It is so. For even if our works appear beautiful outwardly, yet they are evil, since the heart, to which God looks, is perverted.

118. Hence you conclude, that we cannot by our merits anticipate God, and so induce Him to be kind to us, but on the contrary that we do nothing but provoke Him to be against us?

Yes. And therefore I say: merely through His goodness, without any regard to our works, He is pleased to accept us freely in Jesus Christ, imputing His righteousness to us, and does not impute our sins to us (Titus 3:5-7).

119. What do you mean then by saying that a man is justified by faith? That in believing the promises of the gospel and in receiving them in true affiance of the heart, we enter into this righteousness.

120. You mean then that as God offers righteousness to us by the gospel, so it is by faith that we receive it?

Yes.

121. But after God has once received us, are the works which we do by His grace, not pleasing to Him?

Yes, they are, in that He generously accepts them, not however in virtue of their own worthiness.

122. How is that? Are they not accepted as worthy, seeing that they proceed from the Holy Spirit?

No. For there is always some weakness in them, the weakness of our flesh, through which they are defiled.

123. By what means, the, are they made acceptable?

It is by faith. That is to say, that a person is assured in his conscience that God will not examine him harshly, but covering his defects and impurities by the purity of Jesus Christ, He will regard him as perfect.

124. But can we say from this that a Christian man is justified by works after God has called him, or that through them he merits the love of God, and so obtains eternal life?

No. On the contrary, it is said that no man living will be justified in His sight (Psalms 143:2). Therefore we have to pray that He will not enter into judgment with us, nor call us to account.

125. You do not mean therefore that the good works of believers are useless?

No. For God promises to reward them fully, both in this world and in Paradise. But this comes from His gratuitous love toward us: moreover He buries all our faults, so as never to remember them.

126. But can we believe that we are justified, without doing good works? That is impossible. For to believe in Jesus Christ is to receive Him as He has given Himself to us. He promises not only to deliver us from death and restore us to favour with God His Father, through the merit of His

innocence, but also to regenerate us by His Spirit, that we may be enabled to live in holiness.

127. Faith, then, not only does not make us careless of good works, but is the root from which they are produced.

It is so, and for this reason, the doctrine of the Gospel is comprehended in these two points, faith and repentance.

128. What is repentance?

Dissatisfaction with and a hatred of evil and a love good proceeding from the fear of God, and inducing us to mortify our flesh, so that we may be governed and led by the Holy Spirit, in the service of God.

129. But this second point we have mentioned concerning the Christian life.

Yes, and we said that the true and legitimate service of God is to obey His will.

130. Why?

Because He will not be served according to our own imagination, but in the way that pleases Him.

1560 - (Part 2) - The Law

II. The Law 131. What rule has He given us by which we may direct our life? His law.

132. What does it contain?

It is divided into two parts: the first contains four commandments, the other six. Thus there are ten in all.

133. Who made this division?

God Himself, who delivered it to Moses written on two table, and declared that it was reduced into ten words. (Exodus 32:15;Exodus 34:29;Deuteronomy 4:13;Deuteronomy 10:1).

134. What is the content of the first table? The Way of the true worship of God.

135. And the second?

How we are to live with our neighbours, and what we owe them.

136. Repeat the first commandment.

Hear, O Israel, I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage: thou shalt have no other gods before Me (Exodus 20:2-3;Deuteronomy 5:6-7).

137. Explain the meaning. At first He makes a kind of preface for the whole law. For in calling Himself the Eternal and the Creator of the world, He claims authority to command. Then He declares that He is our God, in order that we may esteem His doctrine. For if He is our Saviour, that is good reason why we should be an obedient people to Him.

138. But is not that which He says after the deliverance from the land of Egypt, addressed particularly to the people of Israel?

Yes, it does refer to the physical deliverance of Israel, but it also applies to us all in a general way, in that He has delivered our souls from the spiritual captivity of sin, and the tyranny of the devil.

139. Why does He mention this at the beginning of His law? To remind us how much we are bound to obey His good pleasure, and what gratitude it should be on our part if we do the contrary.

140. And what does He require briefly in this first commandment? That we reserve for Him alone the honour that belongs to Him, and do not transfer it elsewhere.

141. What is the honour due Him? To adore Him alone, to call upon Him, to have our affiance in Him, and all similar things due to His majesty.

142. Why is it said "Before my face"?

Since He who sees and knows all is the judge of the secret thoughts of men, it means that He wants to be worshiped as God, not only by outward confession, but also in pure trust and affection

of heart.

143. Turn to the second Commandment.

Thou shalt not make unto thee a graven image, nor any form that is in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not do honour to them.

144. Does He entirely forbid us to make any image?

No, but He forbids us to make any image with which to represent God, or to worship Him.

145. Why is it unlawful to represent God visibly?

Because there is no resemblance between Him who is eternal Spirit and incomprehensible, and corporal, dead, corruptible and visible matter (Deuteronomy 4:15; Isaiah 40:7; thew:7; Romans 1:23; Acts 17:24-25).

146. You think then that it does dishonour to His majesty to represent Him in this way?

Yes.

147. What kind of worship is here condemned? When we come before an image intending to pray, or bow our knee before it; or to make any other sign of reverence, as if God were there showing Himself to us.

148. This does not mean that all sculpture or painting is universally forbidden, but only all images used in the service of God, or in worshiping Him in visible things, or indeed for any abuse of them in idolatry of any kind whatsoever. That is Song of Solomon 149. Now to what end shall we refer this commandment? With the first commandment, God declared that He alone, and no one beside Him, should be worshiped: so now He shows us the correct form of worship, in order that He may draw us away from all superstitions, and carnal ceremonies.

150. Let us proceed.

He adds a warning that He is the Eternal, our God, strong and jealous, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children of them who hate Him, to the third and fourth generation.

151. Why does He make mention of His might? To indicate that He has power to maintain His glory.

152. What is meant by jealousy? That He cannot allow an associate. For as He has given Himself to us out of His infinite goodness, so He would have us to be entirely His. And this is the chastity of our souls, to be consecrated and dedicated to Him. On the other hand it is a spiritual whoredom for us to turn away from Him to any superstition.

153. How is this to be understood, that He punishes the sin of the fathers on their children? To give us a greater fear of Him. He says not only that He will inflict punishment on those who offend Him, but that their offspring also will be cursed after them.

154. But is it not contrary to the justice of God to punish someone for others?

If we consider the condition of the human race, the question is answered. For by nature we are all cursed, and we cannot complain of God when He leaves us in this condition. Moreover as He manifests His grace and love toward His servants in blessing their children, so this is a testimony to His punishment of the wicked, when He leaves their seed accursed.

155. What more does He say? To incite us by gentleness, He says that He will have mercy on all who love Him and observe His commandments, to a thousand generations.

156. Does He mean that the obedience of a faithful man will save the whole of his race, even if they are still wicked?

No, but that He will extend His goodness toward the faithful to such an extent, that in love for them He will make Himself know to their children, not only to prosper them according to the flesh, but to sanctify them by His Spirit, that He might make them obedient to His will.

157. But this is not always so.

No. For as the Lord reserves for Himself the freedom to show mercy to the children of the ungodly, so on the other hand He retains the power to elect or reject in the generation of the faithful as it seems good to Him (Romans 9:15-22). However, He does this in such a way that men may acknowledge that this promise is not vain or fallacious (Romans 2:6-10).

158. Why does He mention here a thousand generations, and in regard to punishment, mention only three or four? To signify that it is His nature to exercise kindness and gentleness much more than strictness or severity, as He testifies, when He says that He is ready to show mercy, but slow to anger (Exodus 34:6-7; Psalms 103:8).

159. Let us come to the third commandment.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

160. What does this mean?

He forbids us to abuse the name of God, not only in perjury, but also in superfluous and idle swearing.

161. Can the name of God we used lawfully in oaths?

Yes, when they are necessary, i.e., in order to uphold the truth, when it requires it, and in maintaining love and concord among us.

162. Does He reprove no other oaths, then those which are a dishonour to God? In this one case He gives us a general instruction never to utter the name of God except with fear and humility in order to glorify it. For since it is holy and honourable, we ought to guard against taking the Name of God in such a way that we appear to hold it in contempt, or give others occasion to vilify it.

163. How is this to be done? By never thinking or speaking of God and His works without honour and reverence.

164. What follows? A warning, that He will not hold him guiltless, who takes His name in vain.

165. Since elsewhere He gives a general warning that He will punish all transgressors, what is the advantage of this warning?

He wants to declare how highly He regards the glory of His name, explicitly mentioning that He will not suffer anyone to despise it, so that we may be all the more careful to hold it in reverence.

166. Let us come to the fourth commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, and hallowed it.

167. Does He order us to labour six days a week that may rest on the seventh? Not precisely, but in allowing us to labour for six days, He excepts the seventh, on which it is not right to be engaged in work.

168. Does He thus forbid us all work one day a week? This commandment has a particular reason, for the observance of rest is part of the ceremonies of the ancient Law, which was abolished at the coming of Jesus Christ.

169. Do you mean that this commandment properly belongs to the Jews, and that it was given for the time of the Old Testament?

I do, in so far as it is ceremonial.

170. How is that? Is there anything else in it besides the ceremony?

It was given for three reasons.

171. What are they? To represent spiritual rest, in aid of ecclesiastical polity, and for the relief of servants.

172. What is this spiritual rest?

It is to cease from our own works, that the Lord may work in us.

173. How is that done? By mortifying our flesh, that is, renouncing our own nature, so that God may govern us by His Spirit.

174. Is this to be done only one day a week? This is to be done continually. After we have once begun, we must continue all our life.

175. Why, then, is a certain day appointed to represent this?

It is not required that the representation should be altogether identical with the truth, but it is sufficient that there should be some resemblance.

176. But why is the seventh day appointed rather than any other day? The number seven implies perfection in Scripture. Thus it is suited to denote perpetuity. It reminds us also that our spiritual rest is only begun in this life, and will not be perfect until we depart from this world.

177. But what is meant when our Lord asserts that we must rest as He did?

After having created all His works in six days, He dedicated the seventh to the contemplation of His works. And in order better to induce us to do this, He set before us His own example. For nothing is so desirable as to be conformed to Him.

178. Must we meditate continually on the works of God, or is it sufficient on one day out of seven?

We must do it every hour, but because of our weakness, one day is specially appointed. And this is the polity of which I spoke.

179. What order, then, is to be observed on that day? That the people meet to hear the doctrine of God, to engage in common prayer, and bear witness to their faith and religion.

180. What do you mean by saying that this commandment is also given to provide for the relief of servants? To give some relaxation to those who are under the power of others. And likewise, this tends to maintain a common polity. For everyone accustoms himself to labour for the rest of the time, when there is one day for rest.

181. Let us now see how this commandment addresses itself to us. As for the ceremony, it was abolished, for we have the accomplishment of it in Christ Jesus.

182. How? Our old man is crucified, through the power of His death, and through His resurrection we are raised up to newness of life (Romans 6:6).

183. What else is there here for us? That we observe the order constituted in the Church, to hear the Word of God, to engage in public prayers and in the Sacraments, and that we do not contravene the spiritual order among the faithful.

184. And does the figure give us any further benefit?

Yes, indeed. It should lead us to the truth, namely, that being true members of Christ, we should cease from our own works, and put ourselves under His government.

185. Let us come to the second table.

It begins, "Honour thy father and thy mother."

186. What do you mean by "honour"? That children be humble and obedient toward their parents, doing them honour and reverence, helping them and being at their command, as they are bound.

187. Proceed further.

God adds a promise to the commandment, "That thy days may be prolonged on the land which the Lord thy God will give thee."

188. What does that mean? That God will give long life to those who honour their father and mother as they ought.

189. Seeing this life is full of misery, why does God promise man as a favour that he will live long?

However miserable it may be, life on earth is a blessing from God to the faithful, if only for this reason, that in it God testifies to His fatherly love in supporting them in it.

190. Does it follow conversely, that the man who dies prematurely is cursed of God? By no means. Rather does it sometimes happen that the Lord withdraws from this world more quickly those whom He loves most.

191. In so doing, how does He fulfill His promise?

All that God promises us in earthly blessings, we must receive under this condition, viz. that it is expedient for our spiritual salvation. For it would be poor indeed if that did not precede.

192. What of those who are rebellious against their father and mother? Not only will God punish them at the last judgment, but here also God will exercise judgment on their bodies, it may be by letting them die before their time, or ignominiously, or in some other way.

193. Does He not speak expressly of the land of Canaan in this promise?

Yes, so far as the children of Israel are concerned, but the term ought to have a more general meaning for us. For seeing that the earth is the Lord's, whatever be the country we inhabit, He assigns it to us for our habitation (Psalms 24:1;Psalms 89:12;Psalms 115:16).

194. Is that all there is to the commandment?

Though father and mother only are mentioned, nevertheless all superiors are intended, as the reason is the same.

195. What is the reason? That God has given them pre-eminence; for there is no authority whether of parents, or princes, or of any others who are over us, but what God has ordained (Romans 13:1).

196. Repeat the sixth commandment.

Thou shalt not kill.

197. Does it forbid nothing but murder?

Yes, indeed. For seeing it is God who speaks, He gives us law not only for outward deeds, but primarily for the affections of our heart.

198. You mean then that there is some kind of inward murder which God forbids to us?

I do: hatred and rancour, and desire to do evil to our neighbor.

199. Is it sufficient for us not to hate or to bear ill will?

No, for in condemning hatred God signifies that He requires us to love our neighbours and seek their salvation, and all this with true affection and without simulation.

200. State the seventh commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

201. What is the essence of this? That all fornication is cursed by God, and therefore we must abstain from it if we do not want to provoke His anger against us.

202. Does it not require anything else?

We must always regard the nature of the Lawgiver, who does not halt at the outward act, but requires the affection of the heart.

203. What more then does it mean?

Since our bodies and our souls are temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16,1 Corinthians 6:15;2 Corinthians 6:16), we must preserve them in uprightness. And so we must be chaste not only in deed, but also in desire, word and gesture. Accordingly no part of us is to be polluted with unchastity.

204. Let us come to the eighth commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

205. Is it only meant to prohibit the thefts which are punished by justice, or does it extend further?

It refers to all civil traffic and unscrupulous means of acquiring our neighbour's good, whether by violence, or fraud, or in any other kind of way that God has not allowed.

206. Is it enough to abstain from evil deeds, or is covetousness also included here?

We must ever return to this, that the Lawgiver is spiritual, that He does not speak simply of outward thefts, but all schemes, wishes and plans to enrich ourselves at the expense of our neighbour.

207. What are to do then?

We must do our duty in preserving for every man his own.

208. What is the ninth commandment?

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

209. Does it forbid perjury in court, or any kind of lying against our neighbour? In mentioning this one case it gives a general instruction, that we are not to speak evil of our neighbour falsely, nor by our slanders and lies are we do him harm in his possessions, or in his reputations.

210. But why does He expressly mention public perjury? That He may give us a greater abhorrence of this vice of evil speaking and slander, telling us that if a man accustom himself to slandering and defaming his neighbour, he will soon descend to perjury in court.

211. Does He only forbid evil speaking, or does He also include evil thinking?

Both of them, for the reason already stated. For whatever it is wrong to do before men, it is wrong to wish before God.

212. The summarize its meaning.

He enjoins us not to be inclined to misjudge and defame our neighbours, but rather to esteem them highly, as far as the truth will permit, and to preserve their good reputation in our speech.

213. Let us come to the last commandment.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

214. Seeing that the whole law is spiritual, as you have so often said before, and the other commandments are not only to order outward acts, but also the affections of the heart, what more is added here? The Lord wished by the other commandments to rule our affections and will, but here He imposes a law also on our thoughts which though charged with covetousness and desire, yet stop short of an active intention.

215. Do you mean that the least temptation that enters into the thought of a believer is sin, even though he resists it and does not consent to it?

It is certain that all evil thoughts proceed from the infirmity of our flesh, even though we do not consent to them. But I say that this commandment speaks of concupiscence which tickles and pierces the heart of man, without bringing him to a deliberate purpose.

216. You say then that the evil affections which involve a definite act of will or resolution are already condemned, but now the Lord requires of us such integrity, that no wicked desire may enter our hearts, to solicit and incite them to evil. That is right.

217. Can we now give a short summary of the whole law?

We can, reducing it to two articles---the first of which is that we are to love God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength; the second that we love our neighbours as ourselves.

218. What is meant by the love of God? To love Him as God is to have and hold Him as Lord, Saviour and Father, and this requires reverence, honour, faith, and obedience along with love.

219. What does "with all our heart" signify, and "with all our soul, and with all our strength"?

Such a zeal and such a vehemence, that there is in us no desire, no will, no intention and no thought, contrary to this love.

220. What is the meaning of the second article? As we are by nature prone to love ourselves, that this affection overcomes all others, so love to our neighbour should be so predominant in our hearts, as to direct and govern us, and be the rule of all our thoughts and actions.

221. What do you understand by "our neighbours"? Not only our parents and friends, or those acquainted with us, but also those who are unknown to us, and even our enemies.

222. But what connection do they have with us? That which God has placed among all men on earth, and is so inviolable, that it cannot be abolished by the malice of any man.

223. You say, then, that if any man hate us, the blame is his own, and yet according to the order of God, he does not cease to be our neighbour, and we are to regard him as such?

It is Song of Solomon 224. Seeing that the law of God comprises the form of worshiping Him aright, should not the Christian man live according to its command?

Yes indeed. But there is some infirmity in us, so that no man acquits himself perfectly in it.

225. Why then does the Lord require a perfection which is beyond our ability?

He requires nothing which we are not bound to perform. Nevertheless, provided we take care to conform our life to what we are told here, although we are very far from reaching perfection, the Lord does not impute our faults to us.

226. Do you speak of all men in general, or of believers only?

He who is not yet regenerated by the Spirit of God cannot begin to do the least of the commandments. Moreover, even if a person could be found who had fulfilled some part of the law, he would not acquit himself before God, for our Lord pronounces that all those who have not fulfilled all the things contained in it, will be accursed (Deuteronomy 27:26;Galatians 3:10).

227. Hence we must conclude that the law has a two-fold office, in accordance with the fact that there are two classes of men.

Yes, in regard to unbelievers it seems but to convict and make them inexcusable before God (Romans 3:3). And this is what Paul says, that it is the ministry of death, and condemnation (2 Corinthians 3:6,2 Corinthians 3:9). In regard to believers, it has a very different use.

228. What?

First, in that it shows them that they cannot justify themselves by their works, it humbles them and disposes them to seek their salvation in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:3). Secondly, inasmuch as it requires of them much more than they are able to perform, it admonishes them to pray unto the Lord, that He may give them strength and power (Galatians 4:6), and at the same time reminds them of their perpetual guilt, that they may not presume to be proud. Thirdly it is a kind of bridle, by which they are kept in the fear of God.

229. We say then that although during this mortal life we will never fulfill the Law, such perfection is not required of us in vain, for it shows us the mark at which we ought to aim, that each of us, according to the grace God has bestowed on him, may strive continually to press toward it, and to advance day by day. That is as I understand it.

230. Do we not have perfect rule of goodness in the Law?

Yes, and therefore God demands nothing from us, but to follow it; and, on the other hand, repudiates and rejects all that a man undertakes to do beyond what it contains. The only sacrifice He requires is obedience (1 Samuel 15:22;Jeremiah 7:21-23).

231. What is the purpose then of all the admonitions, reproofs, commandments, and exhortations made both by Prophets and Apostles?

They are nothing else than declarations of the Law, leading us into obedience to it rather than turning us away from it.

232. But nothing is said about particular vocations? When it is said that we are to render to every one his due, we may well infer what the duty of each is in his own vocation. Moreover as we have already said, this is expounded for us in the whole of Scripture, for what the Lord has set down in this summary, He treats of there, and with much fuller teaching.

1560 - (Part 3) - Prayer

III. Prayer

233. Since we have spoken sufficiently of the service of God, which is the second part of His worship, let us now speak of the third part.

We said it was the invocation of God in all our needs.

234. Do you think that He alone is to be invoked?

Yes, for He requires this as the worship proper to His Deity.

235. If it is so, in what way is it legitimate for us to ask the aid of men?

There is a great difference between these two things. For we call upon God to protest that we expect no good but from Him, and that we have no refuge elsewhere, and yet we ask the assistance of men, as far as He permits, and has given them the power and means of helping us.

236. You mean that when we seek the succour of men, there is nothing to prevent our calling upon God alone, seeing that we do not put our reliance on them, and do not seek their aid except in so far as God has ordained them to be ministers and dispensers of His blessings, in order to assist us. That is true. And indeed, every benefit that comes to us we should take as coming from God Himself, as in truth it is He who sends it to us by their hands.

237. Nevertheless, should we not give thanks to men for the kindness which they do to us?

Certainly, if only for the reason that God honours them by communicating His blessings to us through their hands, for in this way He lays us under obligation to Him, and wishes us to be mindful of them.

238. Can we not conclude from this that it is wrong to invoke angels, and saints who have departed from this world?

Yes, indeed; for God has not assigned to saints this office of aiding and assisting us. And in regard to angels, though He employs their ministry for our salvation, nevertheless He does not wish us to invoke them, nor to address ourselves to them.

239. You say, then, that all that conflicts with the order instituted by the Lord, contravenes His will?

Yes, for it is a sure sign of infidelity if we are not contented with what the Lord gives to us. Moreover, if instead of having a refuge in God alone, in obedience to His command, we have recourse to them, putting something of our reliance on them, we fall into idolatry, seeing we transfer to them that which God has reserved for Himself.

240. Let us now speak of the way of prayer to God. Is it sufficient to pray with the tongue, or does prayer require also the spirit and the heart? The tongue is not always necessary, but there must be

understanding and affection.

241. How will you prove that?

Since God is Spirit, He always requires the heart, and especially in prayer, in which we enter into communication with Him, wherefore He promises to be near to those only who call upon Him in truth (Psalms 145:18). On the other hand, He curses all who pray to Him in hypocrisy, and without affection (Isaiah 29:13-14).

242. All prayers, then, made only with the mouth are vain? Not only vain, but also displeasing to God.

243. What kind of affection should we have in prayer?

First, that we feel our misery and poverty, and that this feeling should beget sorrow and anguish in us. Secondly, that we have an earnest desire to obtain grace from God. This desire will also kindle our hearts, and engender in us an ardent longing to pray.

244. Does this derive from our nature, or from the grace of God?

Here God must come to our aid, for we are too dull, but the Spirit of God helps us with groanings that cannot be uttered, and forms in our hearts the affection and zeal that God requires, as Paul says (Romans 8:26;Galatians 4:6).

245. Does this mean that we have not to incite and urge ourselves to pray? By no means. On the contrary, when we do not feel such a disposition within us we should beseech the Lord to put it into us, so as to make us capable and fit to pray as we ought.

246. You do not, however, mean that the tongue is quite useless in prayer? Not at all, for sometimes it helps the mind, sustaining and keeping it from being drawn away from God so easily. Besides, since more than all the other members it was formed to the glory of God, it is very reasonable that it should be employed by all means for this purpose. Moreover, the zeal of the heart by its own ardour and vehemence often constrains the tongue to speak quite spontaneously.

247. If so, what about prayer in an unknown tongue?

It is a mockery of God, and a perverse hypocrisy (1 Corinthians 14:14).

248. But when we pray to God, is it a venture in which we do not know whether we will succeed or not? Or ought we to be certain that our praying will be heard? The ground of our prayers should always be, that they will be received by God, and that we shall obtain what we request as far as it is expedient for us. And therefore St. Paul says that true prayer comes from faith (Romans 10:14). For if we have no reliance upon the goodness of God, it will be impossible for us to call upon Him in truth.

249. And what of those who doubt, not knowing if God hears or not? Their prayers are utterly void, since they have no promise, for He says that whatever we ask, believing, we shall receive (Matthew 21:22;Mark 11:24).

250. It remains to learn how and in whose name we can have the boldness to present ourselves before God, seeing that we are so unworthy in ourselves.

First we have promises on which we must rest, without considering our worthiness (Psalms 50:15;Psalms 91:3;Psalms 145:18;Isaiah 30:15;Isaiah 65:24;Jeremiah 29:12;Joel 3:5). Secondly, if we are children of God, He induces and urges us by His Holy Spirit to betake ourselves to Him familiarly, as to our Father (Matthew 9:2,Matthew 9:22; etc.). And lest we, who are poor worms of the earth, and miserable sinners, should be afraid to appear before His glorious majesty, He gives us our Lord Jesus Christ as a Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5;Hebrews 4:16;1 John 2:1), that through Him we may have access and have no doubt of finding grace.

251. Do you understand that we are to call upon God only, in the Name of Jesus Christ?

I understand so, for we have an express commandment about this. And in it we are promised that by His intercession our requests will be heard (John 14:13).

252. It is not, then, temerity or foolish presumption on our part, if we presume to address God personally, seeing that we have Jesus Christ for our Advocate, and if we set Him before us, that God may for His sake be gracious to us and accept us?

No, for we pray as it were by His mouth, since He gives us entrance and audience, and intercedes for us (Romans 8:34).

253. Let us now speak of the substance of our prayers. Can we ask for all that comes into our mind, or is there a certain rule to be observed about it?

If we followed our fantasy, our prayers would be very badly ordered. We are so ignorant that we cannot judge what it is good to ask: Moreover, all our desires are so intemperate that it is necessary that we should not give them a loose rein.

254. What is to be done, then? That God Himself should instruct us, according to what He knows to be expedient; that we do nothing but follow Him, as if He were leading us by the hand.

255. What instructions has He given?

He has given us ample instructions throughout Scripture; but that we may address ourselves the better to a definite end, He has given us a form in which He has briefly comprehended everything that is legitimate and expedient for us to pray for.

256. Repeat it. Our Lord Jesus Christ, being asked by His Disciples to teach them how to pray, answered that they should pray thus (Matthew 6:9-13;Luke 11:1-4): "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

257. To make it easier to understand, tell me how many sentences it contains.

Six, of which the first three concern the glory of God alone, without any reference to ourselves; the other three are for us, and concern our blessing and profit.

258. Are we then to ask God for anything from which no benefit redounds to us?

It is true that God, by His infinite goodness, so arranges and orders things, that nothing tends to the glory of His Name without being also salutary to us. Therefore, when His name is sanctified, He turns it to our sanctification; when His Kingdom comes, we are, in a way, sharers in it. But in desiring and asking all these things, we ought to have regard only for His glory, without thinking of ourselves, or seeking our own profit.

259. According to what you say, the first three of these requests are expedient for us, and yet they ought not to be made with any other intention than of desiring that God may be glorified.

It is so. And similarly, although the last three requests are appointed as prayers for what is expedient to us, yet even in them we ought to seek the glory of God, so that it may be the end of all our desires.

260. Let us come to the exposition. And before we go any further, why is God called our Father, rather than by some other name?

Since it is essential that our consciences have a steadfast assurance, when we pray, our God gives Himself a name. which suggests only gentleness and kindness, in order to take away from us all doubt and anxiety, and to give us boldness in coming to Him personally.

261. Shall we then dare to go to God familiarly, as a child to his father?

Yes, in fact with greater assurance of obtaining what we ask. For if we, being evil, cannot refuse our children bread and meat, when they ask, how much less will our heavenly Father, who is not only good, but sovereign goodness itself (Matthew 7:11).

262. Can we not prove from this very Name, what has been said, viz. that prayer should be grounded on the intercession of Jesus Christ?

Yes, certainly. For God does not acknowledge us as His children, except in so far as we are members of His Song of Solomon 263. Why do you not call God your God, but call Him our Father together?

Each believer may indeed call Him his own Father, but in this formula Jesus Christ instructs us to pray together, to remind us that in our prayers we are to exercise charity towards our neighbours, and not only to care for ourselves.

264. What is meant by the clause "who art in heaven"?

It is just the same as if I were to call Him exalted, mighty, incomprehensible.

265. To what end, and for what reason? That when we call upon Him, we may learn to lift our thoughts on high, and not to have any carnal or earthly thoughts of Him, not to measure Him by our apprehension, nor to subject Him to our will, but to adore His glorious Majesty in humility. It teaches us also to have more reliance on Him, since He is Governor and Master of all.

266. Now expound the first petition. The Name of God is His renown, with which He is celebrated among men. We pray then that His glory may be exalted above all, and in all things.

267. Do you think that His glory can increase or decrease? Not in itself. But this means that it may be manifested, as it ought to be, that all the works which God performs may appear glorious, as

indeed they are, so that He Himself may be glorified in every way.

268. What do you understand by the Kingdom of God in the second petition?

It consists principally of two things: that He leads His own, and governs them by His Spirit, and on the other hand casts down and confounds the reprobate who refuse to subject themselves to His rule, and so makes it clear that there is no power which can resist His power.

269. In what sense do you pray that this Kingdom may come? That day by day the Lord may increase the numbers of the faithful, that day by day He may increasingly bestow His graces upon them, until He has filled them completely; moreover, that He cause His truth to shine more and more and manifest His justice, so that Satan and the powers of darkness may be put to confusion, and all iniquity be destroyed and abolished.

270. Is that not taking place today?

Yes indeed---in part, but we pray that it may continually increase and advance, until at last it comes to its perfection in the day of judgment, in which God alone will be exalted, and every creature will be humbled before His Majesty, and He will be all in all (1 Corinthians 15:28).

271. What do you mean by asking that the will of God may be done? That all creatures may be brought under obedience to Him, and so that everything may be done according to His good will.

272. Do you mean that nothing can be done contrary to His will?

We ask not only that He may bring all things to pass, as He has determined in His counsel, but also that, putting down all rebellion, He may bring all wills to conform to His own.

273. In so doing, do we not renounce our own wills?

We do, not only that He may overthrow our desires, which are at variance with His own good will, bringing them all to nought, but also that He may create in us new spirits and new hearts, so that we may will nothing of ourselves, but rather that His Spirit may will in us, and bring us into full agreement with Him.

274. Why do you add "on earth as it is in heaven"?

Since His heavenly creatures or His angels have it as their own object to obey Him, promptly without opposition, we desire that the same thing may be done on earth, that is, that all men may yield themselves in voluntary obedience.

275. Let us come to the second part. What mean you by "the daily bread" you ask for? In general, everything that we need for our body, not only food and clothing, but all that God knows to be expedient for us, that we may be able to eat our bread in peace.

276. But why do you ask God to give you your food, when He orders us to win it, by working with our hands?

Though He commands us to work for our living, nevertheless it is not our labour, industry, and diligence, that provide us with food, but the blessing of God alone, which makes the labour of our hands to prosper. Moreover we ought to understand that it is not meat that nourishes us, although

we have it owing to His command, but the power of the Lord alone who uses it as His instrument (Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 8:17).

277. Why do you call it yours, when you ask God to give it to you?

Because of the kindness of God it becomes ours, though it is by no means due to us. We are also reminded by this not to desire the bread of others, but only that which we acquire by legitimate means, according to the ordinance of God.

278. Why do you say "daily" and "this day"? That we may learn to be content, and not to covet more than our need requires.

279. Since this prayer is common to all, how can the rich, who have an abundance of good things, provide for a long time, ask for bread each day? The rich, as well as the poor, should understand that none of the things profit them, unless the Lord grant them the use of them, and by His grace make it profitable to them. Thus in having we have nothing, unless He gives it to us.

280. What does the fifth petition contain? That it pleases God to pardon our sins.

281. Is any man living so righteous, that He does not need to make this petition?

No, for the Lord Jesus gave this form of prayer to His Apostles for His Church. Wherefore he who would exempt himself from this, must renounce the community of Christians. And indeed Scripture testifies to us that even the most perfect man seeking to justify himself before God in a single matter, will be found guilty in a thousand (Job 9:3). Thus the only refuge we may have is in His mercy.

282. How do you think that such remission is granted to us? As the words of Jesus Christ used declare: because our sins are debts, making us liable to eternal death, we pray that God will pardon us out of His sheer kindness.

283. You mean, then, that it is by the gratuitous goodness of God that we obtain remission of sins?

Yes, for we can offer no satisfaction for the smallest sin we commit, if God does not exercise His sheer kindness toward us in forgiving us them all.

284. What gain and profit do we receive, when God pardons our sins?

We are acceptable to Him, just as if we were righteous and innocent, and our consciences are assured of His paternal love, from which comes salvation and life.

285. When you pray that He may forgive us as we forgive our debtors, do you mean that in pardoning men we merit pardon from God? By no means, for then pardon would not be by grace, and would not be founded, as it ought to be, on the satisfaction which Jesus Christ made for us in His death. But since by forgetting the injuries done to ourselves, we follow His gentleness and clemency, and so demonstrate that we are His children, God has given us this as a sign in confirmation that we are His children. On the other hand, He indicates to us that we cannot expect anything at His judgment but utter severity and extreme rigour, if we are not ready to pardon and show mercy to others who are guilty toward us.

286. Do you think, then, God refuses to have as His children those who cannot forget the offenses committed against them, so that they cannot hope to be partakers of His grace?

Yes. And He intends that all men may know that with what measure they mete to their neighbours, it shall be measured to them.

287. What follows?

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

288. Do you treat this as one petition?

Yes, for the second part is an explanation of the first part.

289. What is the substance of it? That God does not allow us to fall to evil, or permit us to be overcome by the devil, and the lustful desires of our flesh, which strive against us (Romans 7:23), but He gives us strength to resist, sustains us by His hand, takes us into His safe keeping, to defend and lead us.

290. How is this done? When He governs us by His Spirit, to make us love the good, and hate the evil, follow justice, and flee from sin. By the power of His Spirit, we may overcome the devil, sin and the flesh.

291. Do we stand in need of this?

Yes, for the devil continually watches for us, like a roaring lion ready to devour us (1 Peter 5:8). We are so feeble and frail that he would immediately overcome us, if God did not fortify us, that we might be victorious over him.

292. What does the word "temptation" signify? The wiles and assaults of the devil, which he uses to attack us, seeing that our natural judgment is prone to be deceived and to deceive us, and our will is always ready to addict itself to evil rather than to good.

293. But why do you pray God not to lead you into evil, when this is the proper office of Satan the devil? As God by His mercy preserves the faithful, and does not permit the devil to seduce them, or sin to overcome them, so those whom He means to punish He not only abandons, and deprives of His grace, but also yields to the devil to be subjected to his tyranny, blinds them and delivers them over to a reprobate mind.

294. What is intended by the addition, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever"? To remind us again that our prayers are altogether grounded on the power and goodness of God, and not on ourselves, for we are not worthy to open our mouth in prayer; and also that we may learn to close our prayers in His praise.

295. Is it lawful to ask anything else, not mentioned here?

Although we are free to use other words, and another form and manner, yet not prayer will ever please God which does not correspond to this as the only rule of right prayer.

1560 - (Part 4) - The Word and Sacraments

IV. The Word and Sacraments 296. It is time to come to the fourth part of worship we are to render to God.

We said that this consists in acknowledging with the heart and confirming with the mouth that God is the author of all good, that thereby we may glorify Him.

297. Has He given us any rule for this?

All the praises and thanksgivings contained in Scripture ought to be our rule and guide.

298. Is there nothing regarding this in the Lord's Prayer?

Yes there is, for when we pray that His name may be hallowed, we pray that He may be glorified in all His works, as indeed He is--that He may be praised for His justice when He punishes, for His mercy when He pardons, and for His faithfulness when He fulfils His promises; in short, that there is nothing in which His glory does not shine forth. This is to ascribe to Him the praise for all blessing.

299. What shall we infer from all that we have said?

What truth itself tells us, and was stated at the outset, viz. that this is eternal life to know one true God the Father, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent (John 17:3)--to know Him, I say, in order that we may worship Him aright, that He may be not only our Master, but also our Father and Saviour, and we be in turn His children and servants, and a people dedicated to His glory.

300. How can we attain to such a blessedness? For this end God has left us His holy Word, which is, as it wee, an entry into His heavenly Kingdom.

301. Where do you find this Word?

It is comprised for us in the Holy Scriptures.

302. How are we to use it in order to profit by it? By receiving it with the full consent of our conscience, as truth come down from heaven, submitting ourselves to it in right obedience, loving it with a true affection by having it imprinted in our hearts, we may follow it entirely and conform ourselves to it.

303. Is all this within our own power?

None of it; but God works them in us in this way by His Holy Spirit.

304. But are we not to take trouble and be diligent, and zealously strive by hearing and reading its teaching, as it is declared to us?

Yes, indeed: first each one of us in particular ought to study it: and above all, we are frequently to attend the sermons in which this Word is expounded in the Assembly of the Christians.

305. Do you mean that it is not enough for people to read it privately at home, without altogether hearing its teaching in common? That is just what I mean, while God provides the way for it.

306. Why do you say that?

Because Jesus Christ has established this order in His Church (Ephesians 4:11), and He has declared this to be the only means of edifying and preserving it. Thus we must keep ourselves to it and not be wiser than our Master.

307. Is it necessary, then, that there should be pastors?

Yes; and that we should hear them, receiving the teaching of the Lord in humility by their mouth. Therefore whoever despises them and refuses to hear them, rejects Jesus Christ, and separates himself from the fellowship of the faithful (Matthew 10:40 Luke 10:16).

308. But is it enough to have been instructed by them once, or ought he to continue to do this?

It is little to have begun, unless you go on to persevere. We must continue to be disciples of Christ right to the end. But He has ordained the ministers of the Church to teach in His Name.

309. Is there no other means than the Word by which God communicates Himself to us? To the preaching of His Word He has conjoined the Sacraments.

310. What is a Sacrament? An outward attestation of the grace of God which, by a visible sign, represents spiritual things to imprint the promises of God more firmly in our hearts, and to make us more sure of them.

311. What? Does a visible and natural sign have this power to assure the conscience?

No, not of itself, but in so far as it is ordained of God for this end.

312. Seeing it is the proper office of the Holy Spirit to seal the promises of God in our hearts, how do you attribute this to the Sacraments?

There is a great difference between the one and the other. The Spirit of God in very truth is the only One who can touch and move our hearts, enlighten our minds, and assure our consciences; so that all this ought to be judged as His own work, that praise may be ascribed to Him alone. Nevertheless, the Lord Himself makes use of the Sacraments as inferior instruments according as it seems good to Him, without in any way detracting from the power of the Holy Spirit.

313. You think, then, that the efficacy of the Sacraments does not consist in the outward element, but proceeds entirely from the Spirit of God?

Yes; for the Lord is pleased to work by these instruments which He has instituted: without detracting from His own power.

314. And what moves God to do that? For the alleviation of our weaknesses. If we were spiritual by nature, like the angels, we could behold God and His graces. But as we are bound up with our bodies, it is needful for us that God should make use of figures to represent to us spiritual and heavenly things, for otherwise we could not comprehend them. At the same time, it is expedient for us to have all our senses exercised in His Holy promises, in order to confirm us in them.

315. Since God has introduced the Sacraments to meet our need, it would be arrogance and presumption to think that we could dispense with them.

Certainly: hence he who voluntarily abstains from using them thinks that he has no need of them, condemns Jesus Christ, rejects His grace, and quenches His Holy Spirit.

316. But what assurance of grace can the Sacraments give, seeing that good and bad both receive them?

Although the unbelievers and the wicked make of none effect the grace offered them through the Sacraments, yet it does not follow that the proper nature of the Sacraments is also made of non effect.

317. How, then, and when do the Sacraments produce this effect? When we receive them in faith, seeking Jesus Christ alone and His grace in them.

318. Why do you say that we must seek Jesus Christ in them?

I mean that we are not to be taken up with the earthly sign so as to seek our salvation in it, nor are we to imagine that it has a peculiar power enclosed within it. On the contrary, we are to employ the sign as a help, to lead us directly to the Lord Jesus, that we may find in Him our salvation and all our well-being.

319. Seeing that faith is required, why do you say that they are given to confirm us in faith, to assure us of the promises of God?

It is not sufficient for faith once to be generated in us. It must be nourished and sustained, that it may grow day by day and be increased within us. To nourish, strengthen, and increase it, God gives us the Sacraments. This is what Paul indicates when he says that they are used to seal the promises of God in our hearts (Romans 4:11).

320. But is it not a sign of unbelief when the promises of God are not firm enough for us, without support?

It is a sign of the smallness and weakness of faith, and such is indeed the faith of the children of God, who do not, however, cease to be faithful, although their faith is still imperfect. As long as we live in this world some elements of unfaithfulness remain in our flesh, and therefore we must always advance and grow in faith.

321. How many Sacraments are there in the Christian Church?

There are only two Sacraments common to all which the Lord Jesus has instituted for the whole company of the faithful.

322. What are they?

Baptism and the Holy Supper.

323. What likeness and difference is there between them?

Baptism is for us a kind of entrance into the Church of God, for it testifies that instead of our being strangers to Him, God receives us as members of His family. The Supper testifies that God as a

good Father carefully feeds and refreshes the members of His household.

324. That the meaning may be more clear to us, let us treat of them separately. First, what is the meaning of Baptism?

It consists of two parts. The Lord represents to us in it, first, the forgiveness of our sins (Ephesians 5:26-27) and, secondly, our regeneration or spiritual renewal (Romans 6:4).

325. What resemblance has water with these things in order to represent them? The forgiveness of sins is a kind of washing, by which our souls are cleansed from their defilements, just as the stains of the body are washed away by water.

326. What about the other part? The beginning of our regeneration and its end is our becoming new creatures, through the Spirit of God. Therefore the water is poured on the head as a sign of death, but in such a way that our resurrection is also represented, for instead of being drowned in water, what happens to us is only for a moment.

327. You do not mean that the water is a washing of the soul. By no means, for that pertains to the blood of Christ alone, which was shed in order to wipe away all our stains and render us pure and unpolluted before God (1 John 1:7; 1 Peter 1:19). This is fulfilled in us when our consciences are sprinkled by the Holy Spirit. But by the Sacrament that is sealed to us.

328. Do you think that the water is only a figure to us?

It is such a figure that the reality is conjoined with it, for God does not promise us anything in vain. Accordingly it is certain that in Baptism the forgiveness of sins is offered to us and we receive it.

329. Is this grace fulfilled indiscriminately in all?

No, for some make it of no effect by their perversity. Nevertheless, the Sacrament loses nothing of its nature, although none but believers feel its efficacy.

330. From what does regeneration get its power? From the death and resurrection of Christ. His death has had this effect, that through it our old Adam is crucified, and our evil nature is, as it were, buried, so that it no longer has the strength to rule over us. And the renewal of our life, in obedience to the righteousness of God, derives from the resurrection of Christ.

331. How is this grace applied to us in Baptism? In it we are clothed with Jesus Christ, and receive His Spirit, provided that we do not make ourselves unworthy of the promises given to us in it.

332. What is the proper use of Baptism on our part?

It consists in faith and in repentance. That is, assurance that we have our spiritual purity in Christ, and in feeling within us, and declaring to our neighbours by our works, that His Spirit dwells in us to mortify our natural desires and bring us to follow the Will of God.

333. If this is required, how is it that we baptize infants?

It is not said that faith and repentance should always precede the reception of the Sacrament, but they are only required from those who are capable of them. It is sufficient, then, if infants produce and manifest the fruit of their Baptism after they come to the age of discretion.

334. Can you show that there is nothing inconsistent in this?

Circumcision was also a Sacrament of repentance, as Moses and the prophets declare (Deuteronomy 10:16; Deuteronomy 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4); and was a Sacrament of faith, as St. Paul says (Romans 4:11-12). And yet God has not excluded little children from it.

335. But can you show that they are now admitted to Baptism for the same reason as in the case of circumcision?

Yes, for the promises which God anciently gave to His people of Israel are now extended to the whole world.

336. But does it follow from this that we are to use the sign also? That becomes evident when everything is considered. Jesus Christ has not made us partakers of His grace, which formerly had been bestowed on the people of Israel, in order to diminish it in us, or make it more obscure, but rather to manifest it and to bestow it upon us in increased abundance.

337. Do you reckon that if we denied Baptism to little infants, the grace of God would then be diminished by the coming of Christ?

Yes; for the sign of the bounty and mercy of God toward our children, which they had in ancient times, would be wanting in our case, the very sign which ministers so greatly to our consolation, and to confirm the promise already given in the Command.

338. You mean then that since God in ancient times declared Himself to be the Saviour of little infants, and wanted to have this promise sealed on their bodies by an external Sacrament, it is right that confirmation of it should not be less after the advent of Christ, since the same promise remains and indeed is more clearly attested by the Word and ratified in action.

Yes. And besides, since it is quite evident that the power and the substance of Baptism pertain to little children, to deny them the sign, which is inferior to the substance, would be to do them injury.

339. On what conditions should we baptize little children? As a sign and testimony that they are heirs of God's blessing promised to the seed of the faithful, that when they come of age they are to acknowledge the truth of their Baptism, in order to derive benefit from it.

340. Let us speak of the Supper. And, first, what is its signification? Our Lord instituted it to assure us that by the communication of His body and blood, our souls are nourished, in the hope of eternal life.

341. But why does the Lord represent His body by the bread and His blood by the wine? To signify that as it is the particular virtue of bread to nourish our bodies, to refresh and sustain us in this mortal life, so it pertains to His body to act toward our souls, i.e., in nourishing and quickening them spiritually, so His blood is our joy, our refreshing and our spiritual strength.

342. Do you mean that we must truly communicate in the body and blood of the Lord?

I understand so. But since the whole affiance of our salvation rests in the obedience which He has rendered to God, His Father, in order that it may be imputed to us as if it were ours, we must possess Him: for His blessings are not ours, unless He gives Himself to us first.

343. But did He not give Himself to us when He exposed Himself to death, to reconcile us to God His Father, and deliver us from damnation? That is true; but it is not enough for us unless we receive Him, in order that we may feel in ourselves the fruit and the efficacy of His death and passion.

344. Is not the way to receive Him by faith?

Yes. Not only in believing that He died and rose again, in order to deliver us from eternal death, and acquire life for us, but also that He dwells in us, and conjoined with us in a union as the Head with the members, that by virtue of this conjunction He may make us partakers of all His grace.

345. Does this communion take place apart from the Supper alone?

Yes, indeed, we have it through the Gospel, as St. Paul declares (1 Corinthians 1:9): in that the Lord Jesus Christ promises us in it, that we are flesh of His flesh and bone of His bone (Ephesians 5:30), that He is that living bread which came down from heaven to nourish our souls (John 6:51), and that we are one with Him, as He is one with the Father (John 17:21).

346. What is the blessing that we have in the Sacrament, and what more does it minister to us? This communion is more abundantly confirmed in us, ratified as it were, for although Jesus Christ is truly communicated to us both by Baptism and by the Gospel, nevertheless this only in part, and not fully.

347. What then fully do we have through the sign of the bread? That the body of the Lord Jesus which was once offered to reconcile us to God, is now given to us, to certify to us that we have part in this reconciliation.

348. What do we have in the sign of the wine? That the Lord Jesus, who once shed His blood in payment and satisfaction for our offences, gives it to us to drink, that we may have no doubt at all of receiving its fruit.

349. According to your replies, the Supper takes us back to the death and passion of Jesus Christ, that we may communicate in its virtue?

Yes, for then the unique and perpetual sacrifice was offered for our redemption. Therefore there remains for us nought but to enjoy it.

350. The Supper, then, was not instituted in order to offer up the body of Jesus the Son to the Father?

No, for this office pertains to none but Him alone, since He is the eternal Priest (Hebrews 5:5). But He commands us only to receive His body, not to offer it (Matthew 26:26).

351. Why is there a double sign? Our Lord has appointed it for the sake of our weakness, in order to teach us that He is not only food to our souls, but drink also, so that we may seek our nourishment wholly and entirely in Him, and not elsewhere.

352. Should all men equally use the second sign, that is the chalice?

Yes, this is according to the commandment of Jesus Christ, against which nothing is to be attempted.

353. Do we have in the Supper simply the testimony of the things already mentioned, or are they truly given to us in it?

See that Jesus Christ is the Truth, there can be no doubt that the promises which He made at the Supper, are actually fulfilled in it, and that what He figures in it is made true. Thus in accordance with what He promises and represents in the Sacrament, I do not doubt that He makes us partakers of His very substance, in order to unite us with Himself in one life.

354. But how can this be, when the body of Jesus Christ is in heaven, and we are pilgrims on this earth? By the incomprehensible power of His Spirit, who conjoins things separated by distance.

355. You do not think, then, either that the body is enclosed in the bread, or the blood in the chalice?

No. On the contrary, in order to have the reality of the Sacraments, we must lift up our hearts on high to heaven, where Jesus Christ is in the glory of His Father, from whence we expect Him in our redemption, and do not seek Him in these corruptible elements.

356. You understand, then, that there are two things in this Sacrament, material bread and wine, which we see by the eye, handle by the hands, and perceive by the taste, and Jesus Christ by whom our souls are inwardly nourished?

Yes, but in such a way that we have in it also a testimony and a kind of pledge for the resurrection of our bodies, in that they are made partakers in the sign of life.

357. What is the right use of this Sacrament? That which St. Paul declares, namely that a man examine himself before he approach to it (1 Corinthians 11:28).

358. In what is he to examine himself?

Whether he is a true member of Jesus Christ.

359. By what sign can he know this?

If he has a true faith and repentance, if he loves his neighbour in true charity, and is not tainted by hatred or rancour or discord.

360. But is it necessary to have perfect faith and charity?

Both should be entire and unfeigned, but to have such a perfection, from which nothing is wanting, will not be found among men. Moreover the Supper would have been instituted in vain if no one could receive it unless he were entirely perfect.

361. Imperfection, then, does not prevent us from approaching it. On the contrary, the Supper would be of no use to us, if we were not imperfect. It is an aid and support for our weakness.

362. Do these two Sacraments not serve another end?

Yes, they do. They are also signs and marks of our profession. That is to say, by them we declare that we are of the people of God, and make confession of our Christianity.

363. How ought we to judge a man who never wishes to use it?

He could not be regarded as a Christian, for in so doing he refuses to confess himself as such, and tacitly, as it were, disavows Jesus Christ.

364. Is it sufficient to receive each once?

Baptism is only ordered to be received once, and may not lawfully be repeated. But this is not so with the Supper.

365. What is the reason for that? By Baptism God introduces and receives us into His Church. After He has received us, He signifies by the Supper that He wishes continually to nourish us.

366. To whom does it belong truly to baptize and administer the Supper? To those who are publicly charged to teach in the Church. For the preaching of the Word and the distribution of the Sacraments are things conjoined.

367. Is there any certain proof for this?

Yes, indeed. Our Lord specially charged His Apostles to baptize as well as to preach (Matthew 28:19). In regard to the Supper. He ordered all to follow His example. Moreover He performed the office of a minister in order to give it to others.

368. But ought pastors, who are appointed to dispense the Sacraments, to admit without discretion all who present themselves there? In regard to Baptism, as it is administered today only to infants, there is no need for discrimination; but in the Supper the minister ought to take heed not to give it to a man whom he recognizes to be entirely unworthy.

369. Why so?

Because it would pollute and dishonour the Sacrament.

370. But our Lord admitted Judas to the Supper, impious though he was? His iniquity was still hidden, and although our Lord knew it, yet it was not evident to all.

371. What then is to be done with hypocrites? The minister cannot exclude them as unworthy, but must wait until God has revealed their iniquity.

372. But what if he knows or has been warned that someone is unworthy? That would not be sufficient to exclude him, unless there were a legitimate investigation and decision of the Church.

373. Then there ought to be some order and polity regarding this.

Yes, if the Church is to be well ordered. Some persons must be appointed to watch out for the offences that may be committed. And they, with the authority of the Church, should refuse communion to those who are quite unfit, and to whom communion cannot be given without dishonouring God and scandalizing the faithful.

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