

# Sacred Meditations

By Johann Gerhard  
Translated by Wade R. Johnston

## Introduction

Gerhard published his *Sacred Meditations* in Latin in 1606, at the age of 23. At that point in his life, he was a student of theology at Jena. He was born in Quedlinburg on October 27, 1582. He studied at Wittenberg before Jena. For a succinct summary of Gerhard's life and work, see *The Theology of Post-Reformation Lutheranism*, by Robert Preus (volume 1, pages 52-53). In addition to *Meditationes Sacrae*, Gerhard penned two other important devotional books. The first is *Exercitium Pietatis Quotidianum* (1629), that is, *The Daily Exercise of Piety*, translated into English by the Reverend M.C. Harrison, and published by Repristination Press in 1992. The second is *Schola Pietatis* (1623), that is, *The School of Piety*, which, as far as I know, has not been translated into English, at least not in recent history.

There are two English translations of his *Sacred Meditations* that are known to me. The first is by R. Winterton, published in 1631. The second is by the Reverend C.W. Heisler, originally published in 1896 and currently available through Repristination Press. I became aware of the latter about half way through my translation. Heisler's translation is skilled and comprehensive, but, unfortunately, is done in Jacobean English, which is not familiar to many modern readers. This translation does not at all claim to be equal to its predecessors. It is my prayer, however, that to some small extent it will achieve its goal of conveying the deep, devotional thoughts of this great theologian of our Evangelical Lutheran Church. I have sought to follow the text faithfully, leaving Gerhard's words to stand for themselves, without explanation or interpretation. For this reason, I have noticed, upon comparison, that my translation is often shorter than the others. It is not for me to decide which path is better, the dynamic or literal. I leave that to the reader. I have also included the apparatus from the Latin text with which I worked (Gueterslohæ Vestphalorum, 242.G31 in the WLS library). This is for my own benefit for future editing and should be largely ignored in your devotional reading.

I have translated Gerhard's Bible citations as they appear. The reader should note that, in keeping with the custom of his day, Gerhard often quotes the sense of the passage, and for this reason the passage may appear with different wording than that with which the modern reader is accustomed. Gerhard also frequently personalizes the passages, inserting "I" or "you" where the third person is used. This should not trouble anyone, as he is, so far as I have seen, always faithful to the sense of the text in so doing. When I have sought the aid of a specific translation in order to improve the clarity of the citation for the reader, I have most frequently relied upon the Vulgate and the New King James Version, which seem to fit best oftentimes. Gerhard, however, like any good theologian, most frequently seems to make use of the original Greek and Hebrew. In a day and age where any appreciation for the study of language, especially classical languages, is fast disappearing, one can appreciate such devotion and faithfulness to the original. Gerhard serves as a fine example for all who aspire in our own day to the office of pastor or professor. It is precisely this zeal for the original languages of Scripture and those of our Fathers that has preserved true Lutheranism to this day. May this writing in some small way make just one of those Fathers more accessible to the modern reader who would not otherwise read this great theologian's work in the original or in Jacobean English.

In a day of pragmatism, with its clamoring for quick fixes and short and simple answers, it may serve us well to simply stop and contemplate the Holy Writ for no other reason than to achieve a greater knowledge and appreciation for our blessed Savior and to grow in our desire for his advent in Word and sacrament. I myself have benefited immensely from the time I have spent with this "third preeminent theologian after Luther and Chemnitz." I pray you will as well.

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Wade R. Johnston

*Maundy Thursday, 2003*  
Revised, *The Presentation of our Lord, 2004*

I would like to thank the following people for proofreading and improving this translation: Professor John Brug, Jason Oakland, Robert Guenther, Aaron Boehm, Nathan Berg, Patrick Brown, Jeremy Mattek, and Harmon Lewis. Without their careful attention, the text as it now exists would have been impossible. I am grateful for their time and encouragement. Thank you also to Mark Lotito, without whose patient encouragement and instruction my proficiency in Latin would have been far too insufficient to ever undertake a task such as this.

*Palm Sunday, 2004*

### **Dedication to Sacred Meditations**

Whoever compares a theologian with a physician will see that there are many appropriate areas of comparison. As the physician indeed has two goals—to preserve the health of the human body and, at the same time, to recoup the lost health—so also, the theologian, with respect to the diseased soul, knows the same double goal, for he demonstrates, not only how we are freed from sin, but also how we are preserved in grace. Gregory said that the medicine, both for the body and the soul, is from God. Therefore, they both agree in authorship. Physicians have their certain principles, namely, the written word and experience, to which they refer as a kind of pillar according to which they accept something when it harmonizes and dispute something when it differs. So also, theologians have established and unchangeable principles, that is, the Word of God, comprising of the writings of the prophets and apostles, according to which they accept something that is harmonious and reject that which differs. Some proceed further and show that all true medicine consists of that having itself already been regenerated, since nothing is able to regenerate that has not itself been regenerated. For the cleansing of living spirits from the dye of the impurities of death, which, as it were, is a regeneration of sorts, regenerated bodies are required, that is, spirits that are spiritual bodies by reason of penetration and dyeing, as bodies are by no means anything without the spirit. So also, the true goal of the theologian is the regeneration of the inner, spiritual man, which, as the Truth testifies, occurs through water and the Spirit (John 3). Some in the Church attach to its blessed Cornerstone the collection of the stones of philosophy, yet, since these are not known by all, nor are assented to by all, I do not wish to linger in them. The Creator suffices for me since, by means of my study of theology, I am able to gather that, as is true in medicine, the best theology is practical doctrine and, in like manner, that those who contend that the end of theology is speculation, namely, a number of those among the scholastics, are in no way correct in so thinking. Although it is true that not only practical application but also believing and hoping is proposed in this heavenly philosophy, that does not nevertheless make that which is said to be less practical unimportant, for a physician is also occupied with theory of some sorts, yet it is not for that reason a theoretical discipline, since this itself flows from practical concerns.

Affairs in theology are similar, so that I do not now attach to those who believe only a bare knowledge of the articles of faith, but also require assent to those things, where, by an act of the will, they confirm that these are appropriate arguments and that this cure also pertains to them. And if theology is practical doctrine, then the goal of theology will certainly not be bare knowledge and subtle theory, but rather practical. “If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them,” the Savior said to the disciples (John 13:17). “The substance of our religion consists not in words, but in deeds,” says Justin (*Paraen. ad Graec. I.*). “To be a Christian is not only to say, but also to do,” Ignatius said (*Ad Magn. 4.*). “The height of the Christian religion is to imitate him whom you worship,” Augustine said (*De civ. Dei VIII., 17.*). “What is Christianity? The imitation of God, which has shown itself contrary to the nature of Man” said Basilus (*Homil. X. hexaem.*). And if the goal and completion of Christianity is not bare knowledge, but the putting in action of it, how few real Christians may you find in this day! There are certainly many with knowledge but few with conscience. It is certainly most correct that orthodoxy is defended in books, disputations, public assemblies, and in every way,

but let the life of the professing correspond to this orthodox teaching by the production of works. “If I have knowledge of every mystery but have not love, I am nothing,” said the apostle (1 Corinthians 13:2). What, therefore, will those respond who have a knowledge, not of all, but of little—not a perfect, but at best a tenuous knowledge of mysteries—but yet on account of it become proud, despise others, are jealous of others, and yet scarcely have anything in the way of Christian love? I attach a quote from a certain famous little book to this point. “Whoever wants to know the words of Christ fully and intimately must strive to conform their whole life to him. What good does it do you to dispute with each other about the Trinity if you lack humility, on account of which you displease the Trinity. If you know the whole Bible and all the dictates of every philosophy, what good do they do you without the love and favor of God? Everything, beyond loving and serving God alone, is vanity, the vanity of all vanities” (*Kemp. Imit. Christ. I. 1.*). Why introduce knowledge without the fear of God? If I know everything that is in the world and I am not in love, what will help me in the presence of God? As much as you know more things and know them better than others, that much more seriously you will be judged, unless you have lived a proportionately holier life. “Therefore, do not exalt anything, neither art nor science<sup>1</sup>, but rather fear the knowledge that has been given to you” (*ibid. I. 2.*). A statement of Erasmus also belongs in this place. “To what place does one strive to arrive, in what mode is sin received, for release from it or for adhering to this stain of the soul? May the theologian so treat this, that all may shrink from and hate sin. Do we dispute without end what distinguishes the Father from the Son, and both from the Holy Spirit, whether the thing or the relation, and who may be said to consist of three, of which one is not the other, while they are yet one essence? How much more appropriate is it that this matter should lead us to worship and adore that Trinity, whose majesty it is not right to scrutinize, with piety and holiness, and represent as much as possible with our own concord that ineffable concord in which we will one day belong and into which we will be received! We dispute how it can happen that the fire in which the souls of the impious will be tortured, since it is a material thing, can affect an incorporeal thing. How much more was this related to the end that it warn all men, lest what is in us be revealed by that fire which consumes us” etc. (*Annot. Ad 1 Tim. 1.*). I repeat yet again, however, that I do not attack the thing itself, but the abuse of the thing. It is right that they are devoted to works and studies for an accurate understanding of the articles of faith. It is right that orthodoxy be defended against heresies, but the height and perfection of the Christian religion is not discerned to consist in that alone, but also on the basis of its possession of Christian living and love. Where there is no proper belief in God, there is wicked living. True faith is not present internally where works are not apparent visibly. Whoever does not walk in the light is not yet a son of light (Ephesians 5:9).<sup>2</sup> Those who do not lead a life worthy of a Christian are not Christians.<sup>3</sup>

In order, therefore, that I might add to the desire for piety in those further along in the way of the Lord in this age of our world destined for extinction, as others have also in kindness impressed the same upon me, I have in successive hours written this little book of sacred meditation, standing upon the feet of Augustine, Bernhard, Anselm, Tauler, and others in this genre, with whose sayings I have in several places sprinkled this enchiridion. Nevertheless, I have not attached the name of the author, as I have also not annotated the Scripture references, on the grounds that I feared they may disturb the meditation of the reader.<sup>4</sup> I decided not to refer to many of the writings described either by my words or those of the Fathers, provided that what is said is not designedly directed toward it. If it pleases some to attribute all that has been aptly and suitably said in this little book to the Fathers and that which has been less fittingly said to myself, I do not disagree with that. What alone I seek is that some fruit may from them overflow to the sons of the Church, that I may soberly establish some participation with me in prayer, even if only one pious or holy thought of one soul for one moment arises from the reading of this little book. If Ciceronian words have been brought forward less here, if they have been less aptly applied, I add also, if a sort of measured, weak-voiced allegory of faith has occurred at times in this (which, nevertheless, I hope has not), let one not immediately reject the whole book, nor immediately brand me

<sup>1</sup> *Scientia* knowledge.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 5:8 in English.

<sup>3</sup> Here Johann Arndt’s influence on the young Gerhard is apparent. Gerhard was a staunch defender of Arndt, although most of the Orthodox vehemently opposed him, and here expresses Arndt’s concern that Systematics not overwhelm practical theology.

<sup>4</sup> These were added in later editions.

with the mark of heresy, but carefully weigh the fashion of the writing. I am discussing sacred things, which do not much desire any of the ornaments of the rhetorician. I am writing homilies, not exact disputations. I have wanted to have greater concern for ideas<sup>5</sup> than words. You will not find thorny questions here, but earnest exhortations to a holy life. You will not here find jeering wit, but spiritual pleasantries for the inner man. Here you will not find that the subtleties of disputations harass you, but that the journey trains you in humility. Now and then I chase allegories, not because I recommend that all be transformed into allegory, but because the class of writing is for teaching and admonishing, not for striving to reject that which is seen to be the plain, literal meaning. But why do I add this concerning the above, and I why do I bring forth so much for strengthening myself when the fair-minded reader has already been satisfied and the wicked censors will never be truly be satisfied?

For you, most splendid, thoughtful, prudent men, however, I repeat and offer these sacred meditations, so that some public testimony of various authors of old<sup>6</sup> may stand opposite my own personal observations. You are known and praised in every way for your firmness in preserving the purity of religion, prudence in conducting the republication of that which is excellent, benevolence in respect to whatever literature you will. These and similar ones have easily been obtained by me as first fruits of my studies, the interest on my winter free time invested in various authors of whatever kind, so that I do not hesitate at all, with reverent expression, to present my indebtedness to the highest degree to the grandparents of blessed memory that have drawn me to some of the celebrated writings of these venerable writers of old, which are in a brotherly and familial relationship to my own. Therefore, receive this little gift of writing from my subtlety<sup>7</sup>, most gracious men, with a smiling face and a cheerful mind. Receive me and my studies into your patronage so that, as formerly, so also afterward you may continue to favor me. I pray to the Most High God, with groans and petitions, that your goodness may remain with you continually, that is, that in the future it may not happen that one should despise to most kindly transmit to posterity and preserve for it the holy deposit of the Word, the peace and tranquility, and the blessed republication of increments and of everything altogether that has been abundantly collected in your city.

Jena, the month of April, the year 1606.

Various Venerable Authors  
observed by  
M. Johann Gerhard,  
Quedlinburg

---

<sup>5</sup> Rerum quam verborum.

<sup>6</sup> VV. AA. comes up again and again here. I hope I have understood this abbreviation correctly. I had a hard time finding an explanation for it.

<sup>7</sup> Can also mean weakness or feebleness.

## Table of Contents

- I. Concerning true knowledge of sin.
- II. An exercise of repentance from the Lord's passion.
- III. Concerning the fruit of true and earnest repentance.
- IV. A meditation on the name of Jesus.
- V. An exercise of faith from the love of Christ in the agony of death.
- VI. Consolation for the penitent from the passion of Christ, esp. from Anselm.
- VII. Concerning the fruit of the Lord's passion.
- VIII. Concerning the certainty of our salvation.
- IX. Concerning loving God alone.
- X. Concerning our reconciliation with God.
- XI. Concerning satisfaction for our sins.
- XII. Concerning the nature and properties of true faith.
- XIII. Concerning the spiritual union of Christ and the soul.
- XIV. Concerning the mystery of the incarnation.
- XV. Concerning the salutary fruit of the incarnation.
- XVI. The spiritual refreshment of the pious.
- XVII. Concerning the fruits of Baptism.
- XVIII. Concerning the salutary participation in the body and blood of Christ.
- XIX. Concerning the mystery of the Lord's Supper.
- XX. Concerning earnest preparation before the use of the Holy Supper.
- XXI. Concerning Christ's ascension.
- XXII. A homily concerning the Holy Spirit.
- XXIII. Concerning the dignity of the Church.
- XXIV. Meditation concerning predestination.
- XXV. Concerning the salutary efficacy of prayer.
- XXVI. Concerning the protection of the holy angels.
- XXVII. The snares of the devil.
- XXVIII. General rules for living a pious life.
- XXIX. Concerning misplaced security.
- XXX. Concerning the imitation of the holy life of Christ.
- XXXI. Concerning self-denial.
- XXXII. Concerning the true repose of the soul.
- XXXIII. Concerning a pure conscience.
- XXXIV. Concerning a zeal for true humility.
- XXXV. Concerning the flight from avarice.
- XXXVI. Concerning the properties of true charity.
- XXXVII. Concerning a zeal for chastity.
- XXXVIII. Concerning the fleeting nature of the present life.
- XXXIX. Concerning the vanity of the world.
- XL. Concerning the usefulness of temptation.
- XLI. The fundamentals of Christian patience.
- XLII. How temptation is overcome by perseverance.
- XLIII. Concerning daily consideration of death.
- XLIV. Consolation in the death of friends.
- XLV. Concerning the Last Judgment.
- XLVI. Concerning the desire for eternal life.
- XLVII. Concerning the most blessed vision of God in heaven.

XLVIII. Concerning the most pleasant fellowship of angels in heaven.

XLVIX. Concerning the grave torments of hell.

L. Concerning eternal punishment in hell.

LI. Concerning the spiritual resurrection of the pious.

## I. Concerning true knowledge of sin.

### Confession of a fault heals.

Holy God, Righteous Judge, my sins are seen with eyes and spirit (Leviticus 11:45). Every hour I think about death, because death is nears in every hour (Psalms 7:12). Every day I think about judgment, because for every day a reckoning will have to be rendered (2 Corinthians 5:10). I examine my life and recognize it is entirely vain and profane. Vain and useless are my many actions. Even more vain are my words. Still even more vain than these are my thoughts.

My life is not only vain, but also profane and impious. I find nothing good in it. Even if something in it appears good, it is certainly not good and perfect, because it is corrupted by the contagion of original sin and the sinful nature. Godly Job used to say, “I will fear every work” (Job 9:28). If therefore the holy man complains loudly, what ought the unholy do? “All our righteous acts are as filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).<sup>8</sup> If our righteous acts are such, of what kind, may I ask, are our unrighteous acts? The Savior says, “If you have done everything that has been commanded you, you are to say, ‘We are unworthy servants’” (Luke 17:10). If we are worthless when we obey, we will certainly be abominable when we disobey. If I owe a debt to you, holy God, when I do something that is not a sin, what will I be able to offer you as payment when I do sin?

Our own righteousness, which appears to be righteous in our eyes, is merely unrighteousness when it is compared with your divine righteousness. A lamp is noticed when it shines in the darkness, but is it obscured when it is enveloped by the rays of the sun. Oftentimes a stick is regarded as straight if it is not held to the ruler. Yet, if it is compared to the ruler, one may then discover that the stick has crooked spots. Oftentimes the image of a seal will appear perfect to the naked eye. Nevertheless, the eye of the maker discerns many imperfections. Oftentimes, therefore, a thing, which shines in the estimation of the one doing it, is foul in the discretion of a judge. The first is the judgment of man, the second of God.

The memory of my many sins terrifies me. Even worse, my thoughts explode, “What man can even recognize all of his offenses? Cleanse me from my secret sins, Lord” (Psalm 19:13). I do not dare to lift up my eyes to heaven because I have offended him who lives there (Luke 18:13). Nor can I find refuge on earth. How indeed have I dared to hope for favor from creation when I have offended the Lord of creation? My adversary, the devil, accuses me (Revelation 12:10). “Most fair judge,” he says to God, “declare this despicable one to be mine on account of his sin and guilt—this one who has been unwilling to be yours through grace. Yours he is by nature. Mine he is by his sins. Yours he is by passion. Mine through persuasion. To you he is disobedient. To me he is obedient. From you he receives immortality and the robe of innocence. From me he receives this ragged robe of the wickedest life. He discarded your clothing when he chose mine over yours. Declare this deplorable sinner to be mine and damn him along with me.”

All the earthly elements accuse me. The heavens say, “I have provided light for you for solace.” The air says, “I have given all kinds of birds to you for homage.” The water says, “I have given many different kinds of fish to you for food.” The land says, “I have given bread and wine to you for nutrition but you have nevertheless wasted these things and shown contempt for our Creator. Let all our benefits therefore be turned into your punishment.”<sup>9</sup> The fire says, “Let him be burned in me.” The water says, “Let him be drowned in me.” The air says, “Let him be tossed in me.” The earth says, “Let him be absorbed in me.”<sup>10</sup> The holy angels accuse—those whom God had given to minister to me and for fellowship in the future life. My sin has deprived me of their holy ministry in this life and of the hope for their fellowship in the future life.

The very voice of God himself, namely, the divine law, accuses me. Either the divine law must be fulfilled or I am going to perish. However, since it is impossible for me to fulfill this, I am going to perish in an unbearable eternity. God, whom I am unable to deceive, the most severe judge and the most powerful

<sup>8</sup> Literally, “menstruated rags.”

<sup>9</sup> Literally, “kneeling down” from *supplicia*—kneeling down in either entreaty or to receive punishment.

<sup>10</sup> *Quod ABC addunt: Ignis dicit: A me deglutiat, non sine causa omissum est in DG.*

A, B, and C add “The fire says: ‘Let him be swallowed up by me.’” It is not without cause that this has been omitted in DG.

executioner of his own eternal law, accuses me. He is wisdom itself. From him I am unable to flee. He certainly powerfully reigns everywhere. To where then can I flee (Psalm 139:7)?

To you, O pious Christ, our sole Redeemer and Savior, I can flee. Great are my debts, but greater is your payment. Great is my unrighteousness, but greater is your righteousness. I acknowledge. Please ignore. I open what is closed. Please shut. I uncover. Please cover.<sup>11</sup> In me there is nothing except damnable sin. In you there is nothing except saving merit. I have committed many things on account of which I am most rightly deserve to be damned. You, however, have not left anything undone by which you may mercifully save me.<sup>12</sup> I hear the voice in the Song, which urges me to hide in the clefts of the rock (Song of Solomon 2:14). You are the strongest rock. The clefts of the rock are your wounds (1 Corinthians 10:4). In them, I may hide myself from the accusations of all of creation. My sins cry to heaven, but your blood shed for my sins cries louder (Hebrews 12:24). My sins are persuasive, so that my heart ought to be accused by God, but your passion in my stead is more persuasive, so that I will be defended. My unrighteous life is powerful enough that I ought to be damned, but your righteous life is more powerful, so that I am going to be saved. I appeal from the throne of justice to the throne of mercy, in order that I may not come into the condemnation that I greatly deserve. This is on account of your most holy merit, which has been placed between your condemnation and myself.

## **II. An exercise of repentance from the Lord's passion.**

### **Consider the long-suffering of Christ.**

Behold, faithful soul, the pain that was suffered on the cross, the wounds that weighed him down, the torment of dying. That head, to the trepidation of the angelic spirits, is pierced by the teeth of thorns. The beautiful face is defiled with spit in front of the wicked sons of men. The lucid eyes only waste away in death. The ears, which heard the praise of angels, are filled with the noise of the insults and mockery of sin. The mouth, which proclaimed divine wisdom and taught angels, is given gall and vinegar to drink. The feet, whose footstool is adored, are fastened with nails (Isaiah 66:1). The hands, which stretched out the heavens, are extended on the cross and affixed with nails (Isaiah 45:12). The body, the most holy throne and purest habitation of God, is scourged and broken open by a spear. Nothing has remained in him except the tongue, so that he may pray for those crucifying him (Luke 23:34). He who reigns in heaven with the Father is most sadly afflicted by sin on the cross. God dies. God suffers.<sup>13</sup> God sheds blood.

For a magnificent price, he esteems the quantity of danger. For the price of the remedy of death, he esteems the danger. Altogether great were the wounds that could only be healed by the wounds of the living and vivifying flesh of Christ. Great indeed was the disease that could only be cured by the death of the Physician. Consider, faithful soul, the most vehement wrath of God. The intercessor—himself eternal and the one and only beloved Son—was appointed after the fall of our first parents. Not yet, however, had God's wrath been turned away.<sup>14</sup> He, through whom God established the ages (Hebrews 1:2), was interceding for them and in himself was receiving the sum of the cause of wretchedness, acting as the advocate for our salvation in so doing (1 John 2:1). Not yet, however, had God's wrath been turned away. The Savior himself was clothed in the flesh so that by communicating the glory of divinity to the flesh he was purifying the sinful flesh, so that by the healing power of his perfect righteousness, communicated to the flesh, he was wiping away the poisonous quality of sin inherent in our flesh. Thus, grace befell our flesh. Not yet, nevertheless, had God's fury been turned away. Sin and its merits was transferred to him. His body was bound, beaten, wounded, nailed, crucified, and deposited in the grave. As a result of his suffering, blood flowed abundantly, with the appearance of dew, through every part of his body. His most holy spirit was grieved beyond measure, yes even to the point of death (Matthew 26:38). Subjected to the pains of hell, abandoned by God, he, the eternal Son of the Father, cried out (Matthew 27:46).

<sup>11</sup> These are all imperatives. I bracketed the "you" to bring out the imperative mood.

<sup>12</sup> *Sic ABCD*. Omisisti *G*. I followed these readings and not the one in my text which had *amisisti*, which is to send away or pardon.

<sup>13</sup> *Deus moritur deest in CDG*.

<sup>14</sup> Gerhard is clearly drawing from Isaiah's repeated use of this phrase.



The abundance of his sweat flowed as blood. He so deeply felt such distress, that he required the comfort of angels (Luke 22:43), He, who strengthens all the angels, died. He, who gives life to everyone living, died.

What will happen in dry wood if this is what happens in that which is green (Luke 23:21)? What will happen to sinners, if this is what happens to the just and holy? How will he, who was so furious with the One whose sin was not his own, punish the one to whom the sin belongs? How will he perpetually tolerate in his servants, what he more fiercely punished in his Son? What are those who reject him going to suffer if the one whom he loves suffers so immensely? If Christ, who entered the world without sin, did not depart it without the scourge, how many lashes will the one who comes into the world with sin, lives in sin, and dies with sin deserve?

The slave shall rejoice, since the Son suffers for his transgressions, and even more serious transgressions. The slave heaps up the wrath of God, yet the Son labors in order to mitigate and placate the wrath of the Father. O the infinite wrath of God! O the ineffable fury! O the inestimable inflexibility of righteousness! He rages thus against His only and most beloved Son, the sharer of His own essence, not on account of some transgression of His own, but because He intercedes for the slave boy. What will He do to the slave who perseveres securely in his sins and offenses?

The slave should fear, shudder, and grieve concerning his merits, yet the Son is punished on account of sins that are not his own. The slave who does not cease sinning should fear, yet the Son ceaselessly labors for sin. The creature should fear. His Creator is crucified. The slave who has killed the Lord should fear. He is the impious one and the sinner who has punished the pious and holy One.

Let us hear the Most Beloved crying. Let us hear him weeping. He cries from the cross, "See, O man for whom I suffer. I cry for you, because I die for you. See the punishment with which I am afflicted. See the nails with which I am pierced. There is no pain like that which I suffer. Although the exterior pain is very great, the interior sorrow is more serious, since I am experiencing such exceedingly unpleasant things for you" (Ezekiel 11:19). Have mercy, have mercy on us, O only One who shows compassion, and convert our stony hearts to you.

### **III. Concerning the fruit of true and earnest repentance.**

#### **Christ calls out, "Repent."**

The fundamental and principal aspect of the holy life is repentance toward salvation. Where true repentance is, there is the grace of God. Where the grace of God is, there is Christ. Where Christ is, there are his merits. Where his merits are, there is satisfaction for sin. Where satisfaction for sin is, there is righteousness. Where righteousness is, there is a joyful and tranquil conscience. Where a tranquil conscience is, there is the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is, there is the entire most holy Trinity. Where the holy Trinity is, there is eternal life. Therefore, where true repentance is, there is eternal life. Where true repentance is not, there is neither the remission of sins, nor the grace of God, nor Christ. Neither his merits, nor satisfaction for sin, nor righteousness, nor a tranquil conscience, nor the Holy Spirit, nor the Holy Trinity, nor eternal life is present there.

Why then do we delay our repentance? Why do we put it off until tomorrow? Neither tomorrow nor true repentance is in our power. We are going to have to give an account not only for tomorrow but also for today in the Judgment. Tomorrow is not as certain as the death of the impenitent. God promises pardon for the penitent, but He does not promise tomorrow. The satisfaction of Christ does not exist apart from a heart of true contrition. "Our sins separate us from God," testifies the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 59:22). Through penitence, however, we are returned to him. Know and grieve over the guilt of your sins. Then you will experience the God who has been appeased in Christ.

“I have swept away your iniquities,” says the Lord (Isaiah 44:22). Therefore, our sins were about to be recorded in the heavenly court. “Turn your face from my sins,” begs the prophet (Psalm 51:11).<sup>15</sup> Therefore, God had “placed our iniquities in His sight” (Psalm 90:8). “Return to us, O God,” Moses prays (Psalm 90:13).<sup>16</sup> Therefore, our sins separate us from God. “Our sins testify against us,” Isaiah bewails (Isaiah 59:123).<sup>17</sup> Therefore, they accuse us before the tribunal of divine righteousness. “Cleanse me from my sins,” David prays (Psalm 51:4).<sup>18</sup> Therefore, sin is the most shameful filth in the presence of God. “Cleanse my spirit, because I have sinned against you,” the same one prays (Psalm 51:6).<sup>19</sup> Therefore, sin is a sickness of the soul. “Whoever has sinned against me, I will delete from my book,” the Lord says (Exodus 32:33). Therefore, because of sin we are deleted from the book of life. “Do not cast me away from your face,” the psalmist prays. Therefore, we are cast away from God because of sin. “Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:13ff).<sup>20</sup> Therefore the Holy Spirit is ejected from the temple of the heart by sin as bees chased away by smoke or pigeons by an offensive smell. “Restore to me the joy of your salvation” (Psalm 51:10).<sup>21</sup> Therefore, sins strangle the soul and empty the sap of the heart. “The earth is polluted from its inhabitants who have transgressed the law,” cries Isaiah (Isaiah 24:5). Therefore, sin is in this way a contagious poison. “From the depths I call to you, O Lord,” says the psalmist (Psalm 130:1). Therefore, we are sunk down to hell by sin. “Formerly we were dead in sin,” the apostle says (Ephesians 2:1). Therefore, sin is the spiritual death of the soul.

Through sin, mortal man sends God away. God is infinitely and incomprehensibly good. To send away God is therefore the most infinite and incomprehensible evil. Just as God is the ultimate good, so also sin is the ultimate evil. Punishments and calamities are not inherently evil because good may come out of them. Yes, it is indeed apparent that they are good because they come from the ultimate good, that is, from God, from whom nothing except good is able to proceed. They have existed in the ultimate good, namely, in Christ. The ultimate good, however, is not a participant in true evil. They also lead to the ultimate good, namely, eternal life. “Through suffering Christ entered into his glory” (Luke 24:26). “Through tribulations Christians come into eternal life” (Acts 14:22).

Thus, the ultimate evil is sin because it drags one away from the ultimate good. As much as you approach God, that much you draw away from sin. As much as you approach sin, that much you draw away from God. How beneficial then is repentance, which draws one away from sin and returns him to God! Indeed, as great as sin he is also that great—he whom sin offends, whom, to be sure, neither heaven nor earth can contain. On the other hand, as truly great as repentance, he is also truly great—he to whom we return through repentance. The conscience that a person has polluted, the Creator whom he has offended, the guilt of the one wronged, the creation that has been abused, the devil from whom the impulses came—all these accuse the sinner. How beneficial then is repentance that frees one from such accusations!

Let us hurry then. Let us hurry to so salutary a medicine for such a great death. In death, even if you could express repentance, you could not relinquish sin, but sin would relinquish you. Scarcely will anyone find someone who has expressed repentance in death, except the thief on the cross. “Forty years I have served you,” Jacob said to Laban, “It is time that I provide for my own household” (Genesis 30:30). And you, if you have served so many years in this world and life, should you not begin to prepare for equal years for the soul? Every day our flesh heaps up sins. Therefore, every day the spirit<sup>22</sup> should likewise bathe through repentance. Christ has died in order that sin would die in us and we would desire that he who brings forth life—the Son of God himself who has died—would live and dwell in our hearts.

<sup>15</sup> Verse 9 in the NIV.

<sup>16</sup> The quotation marks appear here as in the text, without a closing quote before Moses’ prayer. Psalm 90:8 reads according to the NIV, “You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the light of your presence.” Obviously, Gerhard is not making a direct quote. For verse 13 of this Psalm, the NIV reads, “Relent, O LORD! How long will it be? Have compassion on your servants.”

<sup>17</sup> The text cites this as verse 123 of chapter 59. There is no 59:123. I am fairly certain that it should be noted as 59:12.

<sup>18</sup> Verse 2 in the NIV.

<sup>19</sup> I am not sure what verse in the NIV this refers to.

<sup>20</sup> Verse 11 ff in the NIV.

<sup>21</sup> Verse 12 in the NIV.

<sup>22</sup> Sanctus *addit G*.

Christ does not enter a man's heart with grace unless John first prepares his way with repentance. God only pours the oil of mercy into the vessel that has been proven by contrition. The Lord mortifies first through contrition so that later He may vivify through the consoling Spirit (1 Samuel 2:6). First, he leads one into hell with serious pain so that he may lead that one back out of hell with savory grace. Elijah first listened to the grand and powerful spirit destroying mountains and breaking stones to pieces and then the disturbing fire (1 Kings 19:11). Finally, these were certainly followed by a light and tranquil whispering of the ears. So also, terror precedes the gust of divine love. Sadness precedes consolation. God does not bind your wounds unless you first recognize and deplore them. God does not cover unless you first uncover. God does not ignore unless you first acknowledge. He does not justify unless you first condemn yourself. He does not console unless you first despair of yourself. God works this true repentance through his Spirit.

#### **IV. A meditation on the name of Jesus.**

##### **What name is able to be sweeter?**

O good Jesus, may you also be Jesus for me. On account of your holy name, have mercy on me. My life condemns me but the name of Jesus will save me. On account of this, your name, act toward me in accordance with your name. And since you are the true and great Savior, you without a doubt consider my very real and great sins. Have mercy on me, good Jesus, in the time of grace and do not damn me in the time of judgment. If you will receive me within the lap of mercy, you will not be diminished on account of me. If you will distribute the crumbs of your goodness to me, you will not be poorer for it. If you have been born for me and circumcised for me, you are also Jesus for me.

How sweet and lovely this name is (Isaiah 9:6)! What indeed is Jesus if not Savior? Are there any misfortunes that can be encountered by him who has been saved? Is there any other salvation we are still able to pray for or to expect? Count me, Lord Jesus, among the number of your sons so that I will be able to praise your holy and saving name along with them. If I had removed my purity from myself, would I have removed your mercy from you? If I had been able to destroy and damn myself to wretchedness, would you not have been able to save me on account of your mercy? Refuse then, O Lord, to pay attention to my sins against you and do not forget your mercy. Do not so weigh and ponder my transgressions that they will prevail over your merit. Do not ponder my transgressions in a way that you forget your good on their account.

Do not remember the wrath against the criminal, but rather recall your compassion toward the wretched one. You who has given a soul to me so that I am able to desire you, would you remove my desire from me? You who showed me my unworthiness and the condemnation I deserved, would you then hide your merits and the promise of eternal life from me? Before the heavenly tribunal I must produce my case, he consoles me by saying that in the court of heaven the name of salvation has been assigned to me by you, because my despicable name has been deleted from heaven by angels.

O most merciful Jesus, who will be Jesus for wretched sinners seeking grace and salvation if you will not (Luke 2:21)?<sup>23</sup> Those seeking salvation in themselves trust in their own righteousness and holiness. But I, finding nothing worthy of eternal life in myself, flee to you, the Savior. Save the damned. Have mercy on sinners. Justify the unrighteous. Absolve the accused. Truth is in you, O Lord. Your name is true and holy (John 14:6). Let your true name then also be true in me so that you are also for me Jesus and Savior.<sup>24</sup> If you are Jesus for me in the present life, you will also be Jesus for me in death, Jesus for me in the Last Judgment, and Jesus for me in eternal life. Surely, you will, good Jesus, because you are yourself unchangeable in essence and for that reason unchangeable in mercy. Your name is not changed, Lord Jesus, because of me. I am only a wretched sinner. Yes indeed, you will by all means also be a Savior for me. You surely did not come to drive me away

<sup>23</sup> A play on the meaning of Jesus' name.

<sup>24</sup> Sit igitur.....verum *deest in CDG*.

(John 6:37). You have willed it that I would want to come. You will also will that I be received when I come. Your words are certainly truth and life (John 14:6).

The original sin propagated within me damns me. You, however, are Jesus for me. My conception in sin damns me, yet you are Jesus for me. My formation in sin and my placement under the curse damns me, yet you are my Savior. My corruption from birth damns me, yet you are my deliverance. The sins of my youth damn me, yet you are my Jesus. The entire course of my life, stained with serious sins, damns me, yet you remain my Jesus. The death that ought to be imposed on me for my sins and tremendous guilt damns me, yet you are my Savior. The most severe sentence of the Last Judgment damns me, yet you are my Jesus.

In me is sin, reprobation, damnation. In Your name is righteousness, election, salvation. But I have been baptized in your name. In your name I believe. In your name I die. In your name I am reborn. And in your name I will appear in the Judgment. Everything is prepared for us in this name and the image of the treasure has been enclosed. How much good departs from these things when I distrust you! Let it please you to remove this unbelief from me. In your very name I pray, O good Jesus, that you do not damn me—me whom you desire to save from the debt incurred by my guilt and unbelief with your precious merits and salvific name.<sup>25</sup>

## V. An exercise of faith from the love of Christ in the agony of death.

### The grace of Jesus profits me.

See, Lord Jesus, that I improperly consider your passion. My heart is distressed and my spirit is exceedingly saddened because my works are not present in your passion and neither are my merits, although your passion is nevertheless my deed and your works are nevertheless my merits. I improperly consider your passion because, although that passion is most sufficient, I still anxiously seek to supplement it with my own works. And if I were to devise some righteousness in myself, your righteousness would no longer benefit me at all or; at the very least, I certainly would not have desired your righteousness to such a degree. If I seek after the works of the law, I will be damned from the law. However, I know already that “I am no longer under the law, but under grace” (Romans 6:14). I have lived immoderately. “I have sinned, holy Father in heaven. I am not worthy to be called your son” (Luke 15:21). Yet, nevertheless you refuse to call me servant.

I beg that the fruit of your passion not be refused to me. Your blood is not fruitless, but indeed produces fruit, freeing my soul. My sins have always lived in my flesh. Finally, I beg you to let them die with me. Thus far, my flesh has always dominated me. Let my spirit triumph. Let the exterior man be subjected to corruption and poisons so that the interior man may emerge to glory. Thus far, I have always obeyed the suggestions of the devil. Finally, I beg you to let him be crushed under my feet (Romans 16:20). Satan is ready and he accuses me, but he has nothing in me.

The view of death terrifies me, but death for me will be the end of my sins and the beginning of a holy life. Soon, at long last, I will be able to please you perfectly, my God.<sup>26 27</sup> Satan terrifies me with my sins, but he really accuses him who took up my infirmities, who God killed because of my sins<sup>28</sup> (Isaiah 53:3). My debt is exceedingly great because I am not able to pay anything concerning it. But I trust in the bondsperson’s riches and kindness. He who is my cosigner<sup>29</sup> frees me. He who accepted my debt in Himself pays for me.

I have sinned, Lord, and my sins are many and great beyond measure. I nevertheless refuse to commit that most atrocious sin whereby I would accuse you—you who testifies by words and works and by oath to have made satisfaction for my iniquities—of a lie. I do not fear my sins because you are my righteousness. I do not fear my ignorance because you are my wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:30). I do not fear death because you are my

<sup>25</sup> Per illud ipsum nomen precor, o bone Jesu, ne mea culpa et incredulitate damner, quem pretioso tuo mearito et salvifico nomine tuo servatum cupis.

<sup>26</sup> In carne peccata mea A.

<sup>27</sup> Mi Deus G.

<sup>28</sup> Satanus *addit* G. I followed that reading. My text omitted *Satanas*.

<sup>29</sup> Idea: Cosigned my loan.

life. I do not fear errors because you are my truth (John 14:6). I do not fear corruption because you are my resurrection (John 11:25). I do not fear the pain of death because you are my joy. I do not fear the most severe judge because you are my righteousness.

Let the dew of your grace and of the consolation of the resurrection be poured into my withering soul. My spirit dries up, but it in a short time it will rejoice in you. My flesh languishes and is weak, but it will blossom in a day not far off. I am forced to undergo corruption, but you, have liberated me from every evil and will liberate me from corruption. You have created me. How will anyone be able to destroy the creation of your hands? You have redeemed me from every enemy. How will a single enemy, death, be able to prevail over me? By all means, you have spent your life and blood and all you have for my salvation. How will death detain those who have been redeemed with such a precious ransom [lutrw<sup>30</sup>]?

You are righteousness, Lord Jesus. My sins will not prevail against you. You are the life and the resurrection. My death will not prevail against you. You are God. Satan will not prevail against you. You have given me the gift of your Spirit (2 Corinthians 1:22). I glory in this, I triumph in this, and I believe most firmly in this, doubting in no way that it has been granted that I may enter the marriage feast of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). You are my wedding clothes, most loving Sponsor, which I have put on in Baptism (Galatians 3:27). You cover my nudity. May I never sew onto this precious and most beautiful dress any patch of my own righteousness. What<sup>31</sup> is the righteousness<sup>32</sup> of man except menstrual rags (Isaiah 64:6)? How then will I dare to sew this abominable cloth onto the robe of righteousness? In this robe, I will appear before your face in your Judgment when you will judge this orb of the earth in justice and equity (Acts 17:31). In this robe, I will appear before your face in the heavenly kingdom. This robe covers my confusion and impropriety,<sup>33</sup> lest any<sup>34</sup> of it be recorded anymore in eternity. There I will appear glorious and holy in your eyes and this flesh of mine, this body of mine clothed with most blessed glory—glory everlasting and forever—shall never perish. Come, Lord Jesus, and he who loves you, come (Revelation 22:20)!

## **VI. Consolation for the penitent from the passion of Christ, especially from Anselm.<sup>35</sup>**

### **The cross of Christ is our crown.**

All the glory of the pious is in the disgraceful passion of the Lord. All the respite of the pious is in the wounds of our Savior. Our life is in His death. Our glory is in His exaltation. How great is your mercy, heavenly Father, almighty God! I have been able to offend you by myself, but I have not been able to appease you by myself. For this reason, you have reconciled me to yourself in Christ. See to it then, O holy God, that you pardon the guilt of my flesh by the flesh of the sacrament. Remember that the Son has suffered good and forget that the servant has worked evil. As my flesh has provoked you to anger, so I pray that the flesh of Christ inclines you to mercy. What my iniquities have merited is great, but what the piety of the Redeemer has promised to me is far and away greater. My unrighteousness is great, but the righteousness of my Redeemer is much greater.

Indeed, how much greater is God than man is? How inferior, indeed, is my malice to his goodness, both in quality and in quantity? All that I am is by your provision. Grant also that all that I am is to your delight. You made me to pray. Make me also to receive. You grant that I search. Grant also that I find. You teach me to knock. Open, therefore, when I knock. From you I have the desire. Let me also have from you the obtainment. From you I have the will, let me also have from you the accomplishment. Holy God, just Judge, if my sins are concealed, they are incurable. If they are seen, they are detestable. They burn me painfully, but even more, they

<sup>30</sup> With iota subscript.

<sup>31</sup> Enim *addit G*.

<sup>32</sup> *Justitia DG*.

<sup>33</sup> *Opprobrium CDG*.

<sup>34</sup> *Quisquam CDG*.

<sup>35</sup> It is what the title says, don't ask me why.

terrify me with fear. Do not keep back such genuine mercy, I pray, from the one in whom you recognize such genuine misery. Meet this great sin with your still greater and superior grace.

Holy Father, I beg you not to pour down your wrath upon me, since you have slain your Son because of my sins. Lord Jesus, who in my place accepted divine wrath on the cross, free me from that divine wrath. Holy Spirit, who has announced in the gospel mercy for the repentant and contrite, shelter me from the wrath of God in your consolation. Holy God, righteous Judge, I cannot find a place where I am able to flee from your angry face. If I ascend into heaven, you are there. If I descend into hell, behold, you are present there. If I rise with the dawn and dwell in the bottom of the sea, your hand can also bring me to trial there and your right hand<sup>36</sup> can apprehend me (Psalm 139:7). Therefore, I flee to Christ, and in his wounds I hide myself. O merciful God, consider the body of your Son who has been wounded in every part so that you will not also consider the wounds of my sins. The blood of your Son cleanses me from the stain of every sin. Hear his most ardent prayer, which he has offered to you for the salvation of the elect.

Holy God, just Judge, my life terrifies me, for everything that I have diligently scattered is either sin or sterility, and any fruit that is seen in my life is either dissension, imperfection, or in some way corrupted. It is only able, not to please, but rather to displease your eyes. Certainly all of my life is either sinful or worthy of damnation, either unfruitful or contemptible. But why do I separate the unfruitfulness from worthiness of damnation? Doubtless, if something is unfruitful it is worthy of damnation. Indeed every tree that does not produce good fruit is thrown into the fire (Matthew 3:10). Not only is that evil tree handed over to the fire, but it also bears no fruit.

It terrifies me that the goats on the left are appointed for judgment, not because they produced something evil but because they produced nothing good (Matthew 25:32). They did not give a meal to the hungry or a drink to the thirsty. O, I too therefore deserve dry bones and injury and eternal fire! What will you answer in that day as all your life is laid out before you in the sight of every eye and as you must ponder it? Neither a hair from a head nor a moment from time will pass away. O the anguish! On the one side are accusing sins; on the other side is terrifying righteousness. One will suffer from below the horrible chaos of hell, from above the most furious judge, from inside the burning conscience, from outside the burning world. Scarcely will the righteous man be saved (1 Peter 4:18). So how will one who has been found to be a sinner save himself? To hide will be impossible. To hide will be intolerable. From where then is the salvation of my soul? From where is counsel? Who is it that is said to be “the messenger of great counsel” (Isaiah 9:5)?<sup>37</sup> It is Jesus himself. The same is the Judge before whose hand I tremble. Find relief, O soul, do not despair. Hope in him whom you fear. Flee to him from whom you have fled. Jesus Christ, because of your name act toward me in accordance with it. Look upon me mercifully when I invoke your name. If you will allow me inside the widest bosom of your mercy, it will not be narrower because of me. It is true, O Lord, that my conscience merits damnation and my repentance does not suffice for satisfaction, but it is certain that your mercy overcomes every offense. In you, Lord, I trust. I will not be put to shame in eternity.

## **VII. Concerning the fruit of the Lord’s passion.**

### **My hope is in the passion of Christ.**

As often as I think about the passion of the Lord, I completely take for granted the great pardon of all my sins. Christ inclines his head for kissing. His arms he stretches out for embracing. His hand he opens for bestowing. His side he opens for looking at his heart that is burning with love. He is lifted up from the earth in order to draw all into himself. His wounds are livid with pain, glowing with love. For that reason, we must enter into the retreat of his heart through the open wounds. By all means “plentiful is his redemption,” because not just a few drops but a most abundant stream of his blood flowed out from five parts of his body. Just as a bunch

---

<sup>36</sup> dextra *BCDG*.

<sup>37</sup> Isaiah 9:6 in NIV.

of grapes placed in a press are crushed by the weight so that on every side liquid pours forth; so also from the flesh of Christ the liquid—blood—poured forth everywhere, pressed under the weight of divine wrath and grievous sins. When Abraham was willing to offer his son in sacrifice, God said, “Now I truly know that you love me” (Genesis 22:12). You also recognize the love of the eternal Father in that he was willing to hand over his one and only Son into death for our sins (John 3:16). We have been loved “while we were yet enemies” (Romans 5:10). Will he forget us now that we have been reconciled through the death of his Son? Will he be able to ignore the precious blood of his Son, although he numbers even the tears and the steps of pious men (Psalm 56:9)? Will Christ be able to ignore his own life and those on whose account he chose to undergo death? Will he be able to forget in glory those on whose account he suffered so much torment?

Consider, faithful soul, the multiplicity of the fruit of the passion of the Lord. Christ shed for us blood-sweat in order that the coldest sweat might not overwhelm us in the agony of death. He willed to be grieved in death so that we may not be wanting in the agony of death. He wanted to undergo the gravest and saddest anxiety all the way to death so that we might be rendered partakers of eternal joy in heaven. He wished to have himself betrayed by a kiss, that sign of friendship and benevolence, in order that He might extinguish sin, by which Satan betrayed our first parents in the disguise of benevolence.<sup>38</sup> He wanted to be captured and bound by the Jews in order that he might set us free—we who had been bound by the chains of sin—and that he might save us from eternal damnation. He wanted his passion to begin in the garden, so that he might make expiation for sin, which had its origin in the garden of paradise. He chose to be consoled by angels so that we may be made the companions of angels in heaven. He was abandoned by his disciples so that he might join us to himself more securely—we who have by our shameful revolt been separated from God. He has been accused by false witnesses in the presence of the assembly so that we might not be accused on account of God’s law by Satan.<sup>39</sup> He has been condemned on earth so that we might be absolved in heaven. He who committed no sin was silent when accused of sin so that we might not be forced to be silent when we are brought into the judgment of God because of our sins.<sup>40</sup> He wished to be slapped on the cheek so that we could be saved from the blows of conscience and Satan. He has suffered mocking himself, so that we may be unable to be mocked by the insults of Satan. His face is veiled, so that the veil of sin might be removed from us—the veil which prevents the appearance of God in us and induces us to damnable ignorance. He chose to be stripped of clothes so that the robe of innocence, lost through sin, would be restored to us. He has been punctured with thorns in order to cure the puncture of our hearts. He sustained the weight of the cross to remove from us the weight of eternal punishment. He cried out that he was forsaken by God so that He could prepare an eternal cohabitation with God for us. He was thirsty on the cross in order to produce the dew of divine grace for us and so that we would not be forced to perish in an eternal thirst.<sup>41</sup> He wanted to be burned by the heat of the divine wrath so that infernal fire would be removed from us. He has been judged in order to free us from the judgment of God. He has been prosecuted as a criminal so that we criminals may be pardoned. He has been scourged by godless hands to take away from us the scourge of the devil. He called out in pain in order to save us from eternal wailing. He poured out tears so that he could wipe away our tears. He has died for us to live. He felt the pains of hell through and through, so that we might never feel them. He was humiliated in order to bring forth the medicine for our pride; was crowned with thorns, in order to obtain for us the heavenly crown.<sup>42</sup> He has suffered at the hands of all so that he might furnish salvation for all. He was darkened in death so that we would live in the light of heavenly glory. He heard disgust and contempt so that we might hear the angelic jubilation in heaven.

Do not despair then, O faithful soul. You have offended the infinite Good with your sins, but an infinite price has been paid. You ought to be judged for your sins, but the Son of God has already been judged for the sins of the whole world, which He received in Himself. Your sins ought to be punished, but God already

---

<sup>38</sup> Est *addit* G.

<sup>39</sup> Consilio G.

<sup>40</sup> Adducta A.

<sup>41</sup> Promeretur AB.

<sup>42</sup> Promeretur AB.

punished them in His Son. The wounds from your sins are great, but more precious is the balm of the blood of Christ. Moses pronounces a curse against you (Deuteronomy 27:26), because you have not kept everything that has been written in the book of the law, but Christ has been made a curse for you (Galatians 3:13). The handwriting has been written against you in the court of heaven, but Christ's blood has deleted that (Colossians 2:14). Therefore, your passion, O loving Christ, is my ultimate refuge.

### **VIII. Concerning the certainty of our salvation.**

#### **A good hope does not know disturbance.**

What disturbs you, my soul? What do you still doubt about the God's mercy? Remember your Creator, who created you without you, who formed your body in secret when your frame was formed in the depths of the earth (Psalm 139:15).<sup>43</sup> Would he who undertook your care when you did not yet exist, who fashioned you according to his image, not also act with concern for you in things now? I am the creation of God. I turn to my Creator. But even if my nature has been infected by the devil, if I have been injured and wounded by robbers, that is to say by sins, nevertheless my Creator still lives. The One who created me will also be able to restore me. He who created me without any evil will be able to raise me up from every evil, that is, from the suggestion of the devil, the transgression of Adam, which is also properly my own action, having entered into me and worked through my whole substance.

My Creator will be able to restore me, provided that he merely wishes to do so. Surely he wants to for who indeed has hatred for his own work? Are we not in his presence as clay in the hands of the potter (Jeremiah 18:6)? Even if he would have hatred for me, he doubtless created me out of nothing. "He is the Savior of all, most especially of those who believe" (1 Timothy 4:10). Very marvelously I am created. Most marvelously I am redeemed. It never has shone forth more clearly that the Lord loves us, than in his passion and wounds. Truly that one, on account of whom the one and only Son has been sent out from the bosom of the Father, is loved by him. In addition, if you do not desire my salvation, Lord Jesus, why did you descend from heaven? Indeed, you have descended into the earth, into death, into the cross. So that the slave may be redeemed, the Son has been seized. Certainly then the human race has been embraced with a great Love, who on account of the redemption of the human race, handed over His Son to be afflicted, beaten, and crucified.

He who has redeemed us is truly beloved in every way, and very precious. Beloved therefore and great is the compassion of the Redeemer. Anyone can see that God loved his chosen sons with a very equitable love, with his one and only Son. To whom, indeed, may we extend something dearer than that which has been extended to us?<sup>44</sup> In order that he might have adopted sons, he did not spare his natural and co-essential Son. How great it is then that he has prepared mansions for us in his heavenly house by giving his Son, "in whom is all the fullness of the deity" (John 14:2; Colossians 2:9)? Certainly where the fullness of the deity is, there also is the fullness of eternal life and glory. For if in Christ He has given the fullness of eternal life,<sup>45</sup> how will he deny even the smallest part of it? Surely, the heavenly Father has embraced his adopted sons with a great love on account of which he handed over his one and only Son. Surely the Son, who handed himself for our sake, has enveloped us with a great love. In order to make us wealthy he endured extreme poverty. He indeed had nowhere to rest his head (Matthew 8:20). In order to make us sons of God he himself was born a man. He also did not once despise working for us after he had accomplished our redemption but still intercedes for us since he is seated at the right hand of the Divine Majesty (Romans 8:34). What necessary for my salvation will I not receive since the one obtaining salvation has bestowed it upon me? How will the Father despise the Son who has become obedient to Him all the way to death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8)? How will the Father reject the Son from whom He has already accepted the ransom?

<sup>43</sup> Quis *AB*.

<sup>44</sup> Cui enim aliquid impendimus, illud carius est eo quod impendimus.

<sup>45</sup> Vitae aeternae *CDG*.



Although my sins accuse me, I trust in this Intercessor. He who excuses is greater than he who accuses. Although my weaknesses terrify me, I glory in his strength. Although Satan accuses me, this Mediator now excuses me. Although heaven and earth and my iniquities mark me as a criminal, it suffices for me that the Creator of heaven and earth and righteousness itself makes supplication for me. It suffices for me to know the Merit whom my merit could not substitute.<sup>46</sup> It suffices for me to have propitiation from him whom alone I have sinned against. Whatever he has determined not to impute will thus be as if it had never happened. Neither does it trouble me that my sins are serious, various, and often repeated. Indeed, unless I am overwhelmed with sin, I would not desire His righteousness. Unless I have a disease, I would not seek the help of medicine. He is the Physician (Matthew 9:12). He is the Savior (Matthew 1:21). He is Righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30). “He is not able to disown himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). Have mercy on me, O Medicine, O Savior, O Righteousness, Amen.

## **IX. Concerning loving God alone.**

### **By love you are wed to the Lord.**

Rise up, faithful soul, and love that highest Good, in whom every good thing exists, without which there is nothing that is truly good. No creature is able to satisfy our will because no creature maintains perfect goodness, but rather has only shared in such. A sort of stream of good is transmitted to them from the Divine, but the source always remains in God. Why then do we want to eagerly pursue a stream that has been abandoned by the source? Any good in the creature is a kind of image of that perfect good that is in God, yes indeed, that is God himself. Why then do we who have been laid hold of by the image want to desert the very thing itself? The dove sent out of Noah’s ark was not able find a place where its foot could rest in the turning of the waters (Genesis 8:8). So also, our soul is not able to find in any of the numerous things under the moon<sup>47</sup> anything that completely satisfies our desires because all of these things are unreliable and fragile. Or does he who loves his dignity less than someone or something else not commit an injustice against himself?<sup>48</sup>

Now surely our souls are nobler than all the creatures because God has redeemed them by his passion and death. Why though did he want to love creatures? Are they not contrary to that majesty into which God raised them?<sup>49</sup> We love things because of something, because of their either power or wisdom or beauty. Is anything more powerful than God, wiser than God, more beautiful than God? All the power of earthly kings is from him and subject to him. All the wisdom of men is foolishness when compared to the Divine. All the beauty of creatures is deformed when compared to the Divine.

If a most powerful king sent<sup>50</sup> his messengers to bring back a poor virgin of a low social class to marry him and the virgin denied him and clung to the messengers and servants of the king instead, would she not be acting stupidly by passing over the king?<sup>51</sup> Thus, God wants to call us to Himself through all that beauty of creatures, and to kindle within us a love for Him.<sup>52</sup>

Why, therefore, does our soul, which the bridegroom Christ desires, cling to creatures as if they were the messengers of the spiritual union?<sup>53</sup> The creatures themselves cry out, “Why have you hung on to us? Why have you placed the end of your desire in us? We are not able to satisfy your appetite. Let both of us assent to our Creator.” From creatures, no reciprocal love should be expected. From creatures, no love also commences

<sup>46</sup> Sufficit mihi ad meritum scire, quod non sufficiat meritum.

<sup>47</sup> Ita anima nostra in omnium rerum sublunarium numero not potest...

<sup>48</sup> An non sibi ipsi injuriam facit, qui infra dignitatem suam aliquid amat?

<sup>49</sup> An non id majestati, in quam evexit illum Deus, contrarium?

<sup>50</sup> Velit A.

<sup>51</sup> Si potentissimus rex quispiam cum tenuis sortis ac conditionis virgine per internuncios de conjugio ageret, an non stolide agree illa virgo, si, paretermisso rego potentissimo, egenis vellet adhaerere internunciis et Regis ministries?

<sup>52</sup> Sic Deus per omnem illam creaturam pulchritudinem nos ad se vocare, ad sui amorem excitare voluit.

<sup>53</sup> Quare ergo anima nostra, quam sponus Christus expetit, creaturis velut internunciis hujus spiritualis conjugii adhaeret?

toward us. But God, “who is love itself,” who loves himself, is unable not to love those who dwell in him. Yes rather by his love He guides all our desires and all of our loves (1 John 4:16). How much ought we therefore love him who first loved us so much? He loved us when we did not yet exist, for it was by divine love that we have been born into this world. He loved us when we were enemies, for it was out of divine mercy and love that he sent his Son as the Redeemer. He loved us when we had fallen away into sin, for it is out of divine love that he does not continually hand us over to death when we fail, but rather waits for our conversion. It is out of divine love that beyond our merits, yes rather against our merits, He leads us to heavenly palaces. Without the love of God, you will never come to the knowledge of His salvation. Without the love of God, all knowledge is useless; indeed, it is by all means a crime. Why does love surpass knowledge of all mysteries (1 Corinthians 13:2)? Because the latter also belongs to the devil while the former only to the pious. Why is the devil most wretched? Because he refuses to love the Greatest Good. Why is God on the contrary the most happy and blessed of all? Because God loves everything and takes delight in all his works (Wisdom 11:25).<sup>54 55</sup> Why isn't the love of God perfected in this life? Now in this life we truly know “only in part and dimly what we will then know” (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In eternal life, we will be perfectly blessed, because we will perfectly love God. We will perfectly love, because we will perfectly know.<sup>56</sup> One will be unable to hope for the perfect love of the divine in future ages if he does not begin to love in this life. The kingdom of God ought to begin in the hearts of men in this life or it will not later be completed in another time. Without the love of God, there is no desire for eternal life. How then will he, who does not love, who does not seek, who does not desire, be a participant in that highest good? As your love is, so also you yourself are, because your love changes you. Love is the highest bond because the one loving and the thing being loved become one.

What has joined the most righteous God with damned sinners? What has joined these who were separated from each other by an infinite distance? Infinite love. The righteousness of God is not weakened because the infinite ransom of Christ intercedes for us. What still joins God the Creator and the faithful created souls, things having been infinitely separated? Love. We are united to God in eternal life to the highest degree. Why? Because we will love to the highest degree. Love unites and love changes. If you love<sup>57</sup> the carnal, you are carnal. If you love the world, you become the world. Now truly “flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 15:50). If you love God and the divine, you will become divine. Love of God is the chariot of Elijah ascending into heaven. Love of God is the pleasure of the mind and the paradise of the soul. It excludes the world. It conquers the devil. It closes hell. It opens heaven. The love of God is the sign with which God seals the elect and believers (Revelation 7:3). In the Last Judgment God will recognize no one in His presence that has not been marked with this sign. And indeed faith itself, the sole cause of our righteousness and salvation, is not genuine unless it is revealed through love (Galatians 5:16). It is not true faith unless it is a firm trust. It is not trust without the love of God. We will not give thanks if the benefit is not recognized. We will not give thanks to Him whom we do not love. If then your faith is true, it recognizes the benefit of Christ the Redeemer. If it recognizes the benefit, it will give thanks. If it gives thanks, it will also love. The love of God is the life and the rest of our souls.

When the soul departs through death, the life of the body perishes. When God departs from the soul because of sin, the life of the soul perishes. On the other hand, “God lives in our hearts through faith” (Ephesians 3:17). He dwells in our souls through love because the love of God is poured out<sup>58</sup> into the hearts of the elect by the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). There is no tranquility of the soul apart from the love of God. The world and Satan are the greatest distress of them [souls], but God is the ultimate rest for souls. There is no peace for consciences, except in those who have been justified by faith. There is no true love of God, therefore, except

---

<sup>54</sup> Wisdom 11:24 in the English versions.

<sup>55</sup> Quare Deus contra felicissimus et beatissimus?

<sup>56</sup> Cognoscimus A.

<sup>57</sup> Diligis G.

<sup>58</sup> Diffunditur A.

in those<sup>59</sup> who have been attached to God by filial trust. For this reason our love of ourselves, the world, and creatures dies within us in order that the love of God, begun in this age and made perfect in the next, may live within us.

## **X. Concerning our reconciliation with God.**

### **Christ has paid back my debt.**

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows” (Isaiah 53:4). O Lord Jesus, because we have earned eternal punishment, you have transferred it over to yourself. You have received in yourself the burden that would have pressed us down all the way into hell. “He was wounded for our iniquities, crushed for our crimes.” We are healed by your bruise. God has placed upon you the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:5, 6). An altogether marvelous exchange—you transfer our sin to yourself and you give to us your righteousness. You inflict upon yourself the death that we deserve and give us life. I am now therefore not able to doubt in any way concerning your grace, or to despair because of my sin. How could you deny that you have transferred the worst in us upon yourself and that you have transferred the best, your work, namely, body and soul, to us?<sup>60</sup> “You will not abandon my soul to hell nor will you allow your holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:10). Surely, he whose sin has been destroyed and removed is holy. “Blessed is he whose iniquities<sup>61</sup> have been forgiven, whose sins the Lord does not count against him” (Psalm 32:1, 2). How will the Lord be able to hold our sins against us when he has already held them against another? On account of the wickedness of his people, he has struck down his most beloved Son. Therefore, “by his knowledge he will justify many and will bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11). How will he justify them? Listen, O soul, and take heed. He will justify them by his knowledge, which is to be saved by the knowledge of divine mercy and grace in Christ, taking hold of it through a firm faith. “This is eternal life: that they may know<sup>62</sup> you, the only true God, and your only Son Jesus Christ, whom you have sent” (John 17:3). And in the same way, “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Faith indeed apprehends the satisfaction of Christ. “For he bore their iniquities. He took upon himself the sins of many and interceded for transgressors” (Isaiah 53:12). For surely he has considered few righteous, with the exception of the sinners he has mercifully received. Few, O Jesus, do you consider righteous unless you forgive their sins of unrighteousness. How then will Christ judge with most severe judgment the sins of penitents whom he has received back into himself? How will he damn the crimes of sinners “when he himself has been made sin” (2 Corinthians 5:21)? Will he judge those whom he calls his friends? Will he judge those for whom he intercedes? Will he judge those for whom he has died?

Rise up, my soul, and forget your sins because the Lord has forgotten them. Whom do you fear as the avenger of sins besides the Lord who has himself made satisfaction for sins? But if someone else would have paid the ransom for my sins then I would certainly still be able to doubt whether the righteous Judge even wants to accept that satisfaction. And if some man or angel had made satisfaction for me, it would surely be uncertain whether or not it would be enough for the cost of redemption. Now, however, there is truly no place left for doubting. How can He who Himself paid the price not accept it? How can that which is itself from God not be enough? What then still troubles you, my soul? “All the ways of the Lord are merciful and true” (Psalm 25:10). The Lord is righteous and his judgment is right” (Psalm 119:137).

What disturbs you, soul? Let divine mercy lift you up. Let divine righteousness also lift you up. But if God is indeed just, he will not demand a double price for the one offense. On account of our sin, he struck down the Son. How then would he strike down the slave for the same thing? How would he also punish us for the sins

---

<sup>59</sup> Qui fide justificati: nullus verus Dei amor, nisi in iis *deest in CDG*.

<sup>60</sup> Quod in nobis pessimum, in te transtulisti, quod optimum in tuum opus, videlicet corpus et animam, quomodo despicias?

<sup>61</sup> Beatus *interponunt CDG*.

<sup>62</sup> Agnoscant *G*.

on account of which the Son has already been punished? “The faithfulness of the Lord will not weaken in eternity” (Psalm 117:2). “I do not want the death of the sinner, but rather that he is converted and lives,” cries our God (Ezekiel 33:11). “Come to me you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you,” shouts our Savior (Matthew 11:28). Or do we accuse the Lord of lying and attempt to weigh down his mercy with the load of our sins? To accuse the Lord of lying and to deny his mercy is a greater sin than all the sins of the world, whereby also Judas sinned more by despairing than the Jews sinned by crucifying Christ. Yes rather, “where sin increased, there grace increased all the more” (Romans 5:20), which kept outweighing our sins in infinite measure. Certainly, sin is of men, but grace is of God. Sin is temporary, but the grace of the Lord for us is from eternity to eternity. By the grace of God, through the death of Christ, reparations have been made and have been established for all eternity for the satisfaction of sins—reparations to which I, devoted and humble, flee.

## **XI. Concerning satisfaction for our sins.**

### **The death of Christ is the life of the pious.**

“Come unto me all you who labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). These are the words of our Savior. Truly, Lord Jesus, I have been burdened beyond measure, and I groan under the load of sin, but I hasten to you, the fountain of the water of life. Come to me, Lord Jesus, so that I am able to come to you. I come to You, Lord Jesus, because you first came to me. I come to you, Lord Jesus, and I anxiously long for you. Indeed, I do not find anything good in me. For if I were to find anything good in me, I would not long for you so anxiously. Truly, Lord Jesus, I labor and am heavy laden. I would not be able to gather any of your holiness your penance for sins for myself unless by good fortune, like the thief on the cross. Have mercy on me, Lord, who had mercy on the thief on the cross.

I have lived in a morally abandoned way. I have lived in sins, but I desire a pious way. I desire a righteous way. Piety and righteousness,<sup>63</sup> however, are far away from my heart, and for that reason I flee to your piety and righteousness. May your spirit, deposited in ransom for many, come to my aid, Lord Jesus (Matthew 20:28). May your most holy body, afflicted with lashes, spit, blows, and thorn, nailed to the cross in shame for me, come to my relief. May your sacred blood, shed in suffering and dying, which cleanses us from all sin, rescue me (1 John 1:7). May your most holy divinity, which sustained human nature in the passion and<sup>64</sup> by resting and not exerting itself accomplished the mystery of my redemption—a feat worthy of adoration—and which added infinite strength and weight to your holy passion, so that therefore God was satisfied by his blood in regard to my wretchedness (Acts 20:28), come to my help. May your wounds, in which all my healing is found, sustain me. May your most holy passion grant me assistance. May your merits, my ultimate refuge and remedy against sin, come to my aid.

Since you have most definitely suffered, you have suffered this for me. Since you therefore are worthy, you are also indeed worthy enough for me and my unworthiness. “God therefore commends his love in us,” and in testimony before men demonstrates it in a way which by all means even excels the intellect of the angels, “because when we were still sinners and enemies of God, Christ died<sup>65</sup> for us” (Romans 5:8). Who cannot but marvel? Who cannot but be astounded? Having been compelled by no one, especially not by men who stunk with sin and were enemies of God’s mercy, the Son intercedes. He not only intercedes, but he also satisfies divine justice by his pauper birth, holy life, bitter passion and cruel death.

O Lord Jesus, who has made intercession and suffered death<sup>66</sup> for me before I could even desire your merits and passions or solicit you with prayers for the ransom you were about to pay, how will you then cast me out from before your face? How will you then deny the fruits of your most holy passion after I have already

<sup>63</sup> Mori desidero: pietas autem et justitia *de sunt in CD*. Sed pie et in justitia mori cupio: pietas vero et justitia sunt procul. *G*.

<sup>64</sup> Et *om. G*.

<sup>65</sup> Est *addit G*.

<sup>66</sup> Es *om. A*.

cried to you from the depths and pleaded diligently with tears and groans for the fruit of your merits (Psalm 130:1)? I am your enemy by nature. Since you have died for me, however, I have been made your friend, your brother, and a son of grace. You have graciously heard the enemy who was not yet petitioning you. How will you despise your friend approaching you with tears and prayers? You do not drive away<sup>67</sup> those coming to you because your word is truth (John 6:37). You have spoken to us in Spirit and in truth, and from you we have received the “words of eternal life” (John 6:68).

Take care and rise up, my soul. Formerly we were sinners by nature. Now we are truly righteous by grace. Before we were enemies. Now we are truly friends and kin. Before our relief was in the death of Christ. Now it is also truly in His life. “Before we were dead<sup>68</sup> in our sins. Now we are truly alive in Christ” (Ephesians 2:5). O the superabundant love of God, with which he has loved us! O the overflowing riches of divine grace that allows us to hold counsel together<sup>69</sup> with him in the heavens! “O the visceral<sup>70</sup> mercy of our God, in which the rising Sun has visited us from on high (Luke 1:78).” But if the death of Christ was able to bestow righteousness and life on us, what will his life be able to bestow? If the Savior, by dying, paid the necessary ransom to the Father, what may he accomplish in life by interceding for us? Indeed, “Christ also dwells in our heart” (Ephesians 3:17). May we also live and flourish in him, calling to mind his most holy merits.

Draw me, Lord Jesus, so that I may acquire the true thing that I here await with firm hope. I, your servant, desire to be with you and to see the glory the Father has given to you (John 12:24), that I may inhabit the mansion which you have prepared for me in the house of your Father (John 14:2) “Blessed are they who live in Your house, O Lord, who praise you for ever and ever” (Psalm 84:5).

## **XII. Concerning the nature and properties of true faith.**

### **Faith, in its true form, is living and victorious.**

O beloved soul, consider the power of faith and give thanks to God, the only giver of faith. He in turn implants one faith in our Savior within us so that from our faith, like sap in a vine branch, we derive life, righteousness, and salvation (John 15:4). On the one hand, Adam has cut down the grace of God and has lost the divine image by his unbelief; on the other hand, we have received grace and the image of God has begun to be renewed in us by faith.

By faith, Christ enters into us and dwells in us (Ephesians 3:17). And where Christ is, there is the grace of God. Where the grace of God is, there is an inheritance of eternal life. “By faith Abel offered God a better sacrifice than Cain” (Hebrews 11:4). So also, we offer God spiritual sacrifices through faith, namely, the fruit of our labors (Hebrews 13:15). “By faith Enoch was transformed” (Hebrews 11:5). In the same way, faith transforms us from human consortium to the heavenly society while we are still in this life. Christ certainly already dwells in us. Eternal life is already in us, but hidden (Colossians 3:3). “By faith Noah prepared an ark” (Hebrews 11:7). In the same way, we enter by faith into the Church, the remnant among all those perishing in this desolate ocean that is the world, the remnant in which souls are saved.

“By faith Abraham left the idolatrous land” (Hebrews 11:8). So also, by faith we exit the world, leaving behind parents, brothers, and relatives, and adhere to the calling word of Christ. By faith, Abraham sojourned in a foreign land and awaited the Promised Land. In the same way, by faith we await the heavenly Jerusalem that God has prepared for us in heaven (Revelation 21:2). We are strangers and aliens in this world, aspiring to the heavenly fatherland by faith (Psalm 39:13). “By faith Sarah conceived her son Isaac in her old age” (Hebrews 11:11). So also, we, although spiritually dead, have received the power of Christ in order to be spiritually conceived. As Christ was once conceived in the innermost parts of the holy Virgin Mary, the faithful soul,

---

<sup>67</sup> Ejicias A.

<sup>68</sup> In *add. CDG*.

<sup>69</sup> Consedere *ABCD*.

<sup>70</sup> Think splaxnizomai from the Greek.

which keeps itself pure from the assemblies of the world, is likewise daily born spiritually. “By faith Abraham sacrificed Isaac” (Hebrews 11:17). Likewise, by faith we willingly<sup>71</sup> sacrifice and offer up our beloved son, that is, our soul. Whomever indeed wishes to follow Christ ought to deny himself, that is, according to the will, renouncing any honor or love of himself (Matthew 16:24).

“By faith Isaac blessed Jacob” (Hebrews 11:20). In the same way, we are restored as participants in every divine blessing. In the seed of Abraham, that is, in Christ, all peoples are certainly blessed. “By faith Joseph prophesied concerning Israel’s exodus from Egypt and gave orders concerning his bones” (Hebrews 11:22). So also, we await an exodus from this spiritual Egypt, namely, the world, and the blessed resurrection of the body.

“By faith Moses was hidden for three months” (Hebrews 11:23).<sup>72</sup> In the same way, faith hides us from the tyranny of Satan at the same time that it leads us into the royal palaces of God and adopts us into the spiritual realm. “By faith Moses chose to share in the calamity of his people rather than to live in the glory of Egypt” (Hebrews 11:25). Likewise, faith excites within us a contempt for the glory, honor, riches, and pleasures of this age, and a desire for the heavenly kingdom. By faith, we choose ignominy in Christ rather than the treasure of this age. “By faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the king’s anger” (Hebrews 11:27). Thus, faith animates us and confirms us so that we also are not terrified by the threats of the tyrants of this world, but are steadfast and constant in spirit in obedience to God’s call.

“By faith, Israel celebrated the Passover” (Hebrews 11:28). In the same way, we celebrate the Passover by faith. Our Passover sacrifice is Christ (1 Corinthians 5:7), whose flesh is truly food and whose blood is truly drink (John 6:55). By faith, Israel crossed through the Red Sea” (Hebrews 11:29). So also, we pass by faith through the sea of this age. “By faith, the walls of Jericho fell” (Hebrews 11:30). Likewise, by faith we destroy all the entrenchments of Satan (2 Corinthians 10:5). “By faith, Rahab was saved” (Hebrews 11:31). In the same way, we will be saved from the universal destruction in that *panoethria* of this world. “By faith, the fathers conquered kingdoms, shut the mouths of lions, extinguished the fury of flames” (Hebrews 11:33-34). So also, we destroy the kingdom of Satan by faith, evading the snares and fury of the infernal lion, and are freed from the burning of hell-fire.

Faith, however, is not a bare opinion and profession, but a living and efficacious apprehension of Christ in the Gospel proposition. It is a most complete persuasion concerning the grace of God, a most confident repose of our heart, and a peace resting in the merits of Christ. This faith is conceived by the seed of the Word of God, for faith and the Spirit are one, and the Word is the vehicle of the Holy Spirit. Fruit follows the nature of its seed. Faith is a divine fruit. It is therefore necessary for the divine to be present in the seed, namely, the Word. As light was coming forth into creation by the Word of God, for “God spoke and there was light” (Genesis 1:3), similarly, the light of faith comes forth from the divine Word. “In your light we will see light,” says the Psalm writer (Psalm 36:10). When faith weds us to Christ, it unites us with Christ and for that reason faith is the mother of all strength in us. Where faith is, there is Christ. Where Christ is, there is a holy life, namely, true humility, true gentleness and true love. Christ and the Holy Spirit are not torn asunder. Where the Spirit is, there is holiness. Therefore, where there a holy life does not exist, neither does the sanctifying Spirit. Where the Spirit is not present, neither is Christ. Where Christ is not present, neither is true faith. Whatever branch does not derive sap from the vine is unable to be united with life. Neither do we derive life and sap outside of Christ.

Faith is a certain spiritual light. The heart is certainly illumined by faith. Therefore, faith scatters the beams of good works. Where there are truly no rays of spiritual life, there also the true light of faith is not present. Evil works are the works of darkness (Romans 13:12). Faith, however, is light. “What real fellowship does light have with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14). Evil works are the seed of Satan. Faith is the seed of Christ (Matthew 13:25). What real fellowship does Christ have with Satan? “By faith hearts are purified” (Acts 15:9). Really, how is internal purity of the heart able to be where outward impure words and deeds are evident?

---

<sup>71</sup> The phrase denotes an action rooted in the will.

<sup>72</sup> As a child.

Faith is our victory (1 John 5:4). How then can there be true faith in the same place where the flesh has conquered the spirit and led it away as a captive? Through faith, we have Christ, and in Christ is eternal life. But no one who persists in impenitence and in sin shares in eternal life. How then can they share in Christ? In faith. Kindle in us, O pious Christ, the light of true faith so that, through faith, we may obtain eternal salvation.

### **XIII. Concerning the spiritual union of Christ and the soul.**

#### **Christ is the Bridegroom of souls.**

“I will betroth you to me forever,” Christ says to the faithful soul (Hosea 2:19). Christ wanted to attend the wedding celebration in Cana of Galilee (John 2:2) in order to show that he had come into the world for a spiritual wedding. “Delight greatly in the Lord and rejoice in your God, faithful soul, who clothed you with the vestments of salvation and the robe of righteousness, who encompasses you as a bride adorned with a necklace” (Isaiah 61:10).<sup>73</sup> Rejoice on account of the honor of the Bridegroom. Rejoice on account of the adornment of the Bridegroom. Rejoice on account of the love of the Bridegroom. His is the greatest honor. “He is indeed true God, blessed for all ages” (Romans 9:5). How great then is the honor of this creature, namely, the faithful soul, that the very Creator Himself wishes to betroth it. Greatest is his adornment. “He is indeed fairer than the sons of man” (Psalm 45:3).<sup>74</sup> For “They were seeing his glory, the glory of the one and only begotten from the Father” (John 1:14). “His face was like the sun and his vestments were as snow” (Matthew 17:2).<sup>75</sup> Grace has been poured upon his lips” (Psalm 45:3).<sup>76</sup> “He has been crowned with honor and glory” (Psalm 8:6).<sup>77</sup> How priceless then is mercy since that most beautiful One did not disdain to select the soul disfigured with the stain of sin for His bride! The greatest majesty on the part of the Bridegroom. The greatest infirmity on the part of the bride. The greatest beauty on the part of the Bridegroom. The greatest deformity on the part of the bride. And yet, the love of the Bridegroom that has been most honorably and beautifully promised to the bride is still greater.

See the immense love of your Bridegroom, O faithful soul. Love brought him from heaven to earth; love bound him to the pillar,<sup>78</sup> held him to the cross, closed him in the tomb, and dragged Him to hell. What did all this if not love for the bride? But our chained heart was heavier than stone and lead, since before the chains of such a great love could drag us above to God, they dragged God from above to us.<sup>79</sup> “The bride was naked and bare,” so being naked she could not be invited into the kingdom of heaven, to the palace of the king (Ezekiel 16:22). He himself clothes the bride with the vestments of salvation and righteousness. Although she was lying down in the sordid tunic of sins and in the most shameful cloth of iniquity, he gave of his vestments so that she could clothe herself, wrapping her in shining<sup>80</sup> and glittering linen. The linen is the justifying of the saints. That cloth is the righteous share in the death and passion of the Bridegroom.

<sup>73</sup> Gerhard’s words take an imperatival force, differing from the future indicatives of the Vulgate.

<sup>74</sup> “*Speciosus forma prae filiis hominum*” diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis propterea benedixit te Deus in aeternum. The italicized is the portion Gerhard quotes from this verse as translated in the Vulgate. I chose to follow the NKJV translation of this verse because it best conveyed the sense of appearance, and not stature, as the NIV implies. Luther agrees with this in his translation: “du bist der Schönste unter den Menschenkindern.” It should be noted that in our Bibles this is Psalm 45:2, not 45:3. Gerhard cites it differently than it appears in the Vulgate, English translations, and the German. It is 45:3 in the Hebrew, however, so we can appreciate the dogmatician’s loyalty to the original.

<sup>75</sup> Gerhard follows the Vulgate in saying “as snow,” rather than the Greek (and Luther’s German), which has “as light.”

<sup>76</sup> See footnote 68.

<sup>77</sup> Once again, Gerhard is following the Hebrew verse numbers, which differs from the English, German, and Latin because it is a verse ahead of them (making it 8:5).

<sup>78</sup> Site of His scourging.

<sup>79</sup> “Sed cor nostrum saxo et plumbo gravius, qod tanti amoris cinculis non trahit sursum ad Deum, ex quo prius traxit Deum ad hominess.

<sup>80</sup> Splendente G.

Jacob was laboring for fourteen years to acquire Rachel. Christ for almost thirty-four years endured famine, thirst, cold, poverty, ignominy, contempt, chains, scourges, bitter gall, death, and crucifixion in order to provide for the faithful soul and to be able to acquire the bride. Samson, deciding to leave his own people, went down and sought a bride from among the Philistines (Judges 14:3). The Son of God descended and chose for himself a bride from among humanity, a bride given over to eternal damnation and death.

This bride's race was hostile to the heavenly Father, but Christ himself reconciled them to the Father by his most bitter passion.<sup>81</sup> The bride was trampled in her blood, cast upon the face of the earth (Ezekiel 16:22). But he himself washed her in the water of baptism and cleansed her in the most holy bath (Ephesians 5:26). He thoroughly cleansed the blood of the bride with his own blood, for "the blood of the Son of God cleanses us from all sins" (1 John 1:7). The bride was polluted and deformed, but he anointed<sup>82</sup> her with oil, namely, mercy and grace. The bride was not dressed honorably, but he gave bracelets and earrings, adorning her bountifully with virtue and the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 16:9,11). The bride was a pauper and, although she was supposed to give a wedding pledge, she did not have one.<sup>83</sup> For that reason, he gave to her the pledge of his Spirit, accepted from her the pledge of her flesh, and led her into heaven (Ephesians 1:14).<sup>84</sup> The bride was hungry, but he gave her a pastry of fine flour, honey, and oil for eating; with His very own body and blood He fed her for eternal life. The bride is in every way unfaithful<sup>85</sup> and often breaks the marriage bond, fornicating with the world and the devil, but the Bridegroom receives her over and over again in grace with his immense love, renewing her in true conversion to him.

Recognize, O faithful soul, such convincing evidence of infinite love. Love, O faithful soul, the love of him who out of love for you descended from heaven into the womb of the Virgin. How greatly we ought to love him who loved us more than himself. How much greater is he who handed himself over for us. Let all our life be rendered in conformity to him who conformed himself to us out of love for all of us. His merit is considered most ungratefully when someone does not in turn love the one loving him. How much therefore ought he who has concealed his majesty out of love for us be loved by us, for whom he did it. O blessed is the soul that has been spiritually wed to Christ in the bonds of marriage,<sup>86</sup> that confidently and securely applies all the benefits of Christ to itself just as elsewhere in marriage the wife shines with the beams of light of the husband.

However, we are rendered participants in this blessed and spiritual marriage only by faith, as is written, "I will betroth you to me in faith" (Hosea 2:19). Faith in Christ, like a vine, implants us with spiritual life as we draw life and sap from it (John 15:5). As it were then, those who live in this union are no longer two, but one flesh (Matthew 19:6), as in this manner "they adhere to the Lord through faith, becoming one spirit with him" (2 Corinthians 6:17), because Christ dwells in our hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17). That faith, if it is true, works through love (Galatians 5:6). In the same way, in the Old Testament the priests were compelled to marry virgins<sup>87</sup>; so also, that Priest of heaven spiritually takes for himself a virgin who has kept herself intact<sup>88</sup> and immaculate from connections with devil, the world, and her own flesh. Make us worthy, O Christ, so that we may at last be brought into the wedding feast of the Lamb, Amen.

#### **XIV. Concerning the mystery of the incarnation.**

##### **The cradle of Christ shines.<sup>89</sup>**

---

<sup>81</sup> Conciliavit G.

<sup>82</sup> Perfumes her, removing her stench.

<sup>83</sup> We had nothing to give Him, let alone a dowry.

<sup>84</sup> Ideo reliquit ei arrham spiritus et arrham carnis ab eadem accepit et in coelum adduxit.

<sup>85</sup> I cannot find the exact meaning of the Latin word *immorigera*, which appears here.

<sup>86</sup> Or, "which has been joined in marriage to the bound Christ."

<sup>87</sup> *Ducere* is frequently used with *matrimonium* to mean "to marry." *Matrimonium* is absent here, but is clearly included in the sense and context of the sentence, therefore justifying the translation.

<sup>88</sup> Blameless.

<sup>89</sup> Fulgent, in my text, which is plural, and whose plurality I do not understand.



Let us lead our faithful soul away from these times and contemplate the mystery of the nativity of the Lord. The Son of God descended from heaven to us so that we may obtain adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4,5). God became man so that we may become partakers of grace from God and of the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4). Christ wished to be born at the evening star of the world so that he could indicate that the benefits of the incarnation are not attained in this present life, but in eternal life. He who truly brings peace with God to the human race wanted to be born in the time of the peace of Augustus. He who is<sup>90</sup> the true Liberator and Vindicator of his people wanted to be born in the time of Israel's servitude. He wanted to be born under the empire of a foreign lord since his kingdom was not of this world (John 18:36). He was born of the Virgin to indicate that he himself is not conceived or born except in the hearts of them who are spiritual virgins (2 Corinthians 11:2), that is, not in the minds of those who adhere to the world or the devil, but in those who cling to God in one Spirit. He was born pure and holy in order to sanctify our impure and contaminated nativity. He was born of a woman betrothed to a man in honor of the divine institution of matrimony. He who was the true light illuminating the darkness of the world was born in the darkness of night. He who is the true food of our souls was placed in a manger. He was born between a cow and an ass, in order that he may lead back to its former dignity the humanity that has been made like beasts through sin. He, the food through whom the richest of divine blessings are offered, was born in Bethlehem, that is, the house of bread. He who is<sup>91</sup> the first and only begotten of his mother in the world is also the first and only begotten of the Father in heaven. He was born a pauper and destitute in order to prepare heavenly riches for us (2 Corinthians 8:9). He was born in the vileness of a stable for beasts to lead us to palaces of heavenly dwelling.

The messenger of such great benefits was sent from heaven because no one on earth understood its magnitude. The one with merits of heavenly value was also of heavenly birth. The army of angels, able to hold blessed fellowship with us because of the Son of God's incarnation, rejoices. Such a great miracle was first announced to shepherds because the true Shepherd of souls was coming to lead the perishing sheep into life. This matter of such great joy was announced in contemptibility and shame because no one who is not displeased with himself in his own eyes is able to become a participant in him. This was announced to the vigilant crowd at his nativity because it is not those who snore in sin but those whose heart watches for God that become partakers of such great riches.

The choir of heavenly soldiers, deeply saddened by the guilt of our first parents, sings joyfully. The glory of the Lord and his King appeared in heaven, which in their baseness the men on earth hated. The descent of the angels caused fear because he who was going to take away the cause of all fear from their midst was born to them. Joy was announced from heaven because He who is the author and giver of all joy was born. Joy was suggested because the enmity between God and men, the cause of all sadness, was removed. *Gloria in excelsis Deo* was offered, which our first parent wished to seize from him by his illicit transgression of the command. True peace was distributed in this nativity, because formerly<sup>92</sup> men were hostile toward God,<sup>93</sup> formerly their own conscience was against them, formerly they were quarrelling even among themselves. True peace was rendered on earth because he who held them captive was overcome.

Let us also with the shepherds approach the manger of Christ, that is, the Church, and let us come upon this infant wrapped in<sup>94</sup> bandages, that is, in the Sacred Scriptures. Let us also ponder with Mary words of such great mystery, the holy mother of the Lord, and let us continually and daily reflect on this in remembrance. Let us continue the singing of the angels with our own voices and let us give thanks for his merits on account of their great benefit. Let us sing joyfully and cheer with the heavenly host. If indeed the angels rejoice to such a degree for our cause, how much more ought we, for whom this infant is born and given, rejoice (Isaiah 9:6)? If the Israelites raised voices and shouts of joy when the Ark of the Covenant was brought to them (1 Samuel 4:5),

---

<sup>90</sup> Est *om.* CDG.

<sup>91</sup> Est *om.* A.

<sup>92</sup> Ante A.

<sup>93</sup> Dei CDG.

<sup>94</sup> In *om.* G.

which was a figure and shadow of the incarnation of the Lord, how much more ought we be joyful since the Lord himself descended to assume our flesh? If Abraham was glad when he saw the day of the Lord and prepared for the time when the Lord himself would assume human form, what ought we do when our nature has been joined with him in an indissoluble and perpetual covenant?

Let us marvel at this immense kindness of God who, when we were not able to ascend to him, chose to descend to us. Let us look in wonder at the immense power of God who was able to make one most intimate union out of two most distant things, namely, the divine and human nature, so that now man and God may also likewise be one. Let us wonder at the wisdom of God who was able to find a way for our redemption when neither angels nor men were able to see a way. The offense was infinitely great, requiring an infinitely great satisfaction. Man offended God. From man satisfaction was required. But man was able neither to furnish an infinite satisfaction nor to satisfy divine righteousness without an infinite ransom. Therefore, God was made man in order to make satisfaction for those who had sinned and to pay an infinite ransom to him who was infinite.

Let us marvel at this wonderful plan of righteousness and mercy from the divine, which no creature was able to discover before God manifested Himself, and now after he has been made manifest, no creature is fully able to comprehend.<sup>95</sup> Marvel thus, and do not probe<sup>96</sup> more curiously. We may desire to look into it, although we cannot understand it all. Let us admit our ignorance rather than choose to deny the power of God.

## **XV. Concerning the salutary fruit of the incarnation.**

### **Give thanks for Christ's redemption.**

“I announce great joy to you,” said the angel in the nativity of our Savior (Luke 2:10). It is truly great and greater than human intelligence understands. Great was the evil. We were held captive under the wrath of God, the power of the devil, and eternal damnation. Greater still was the evil since man was either ignorant of or denied that greatest evil. Now truly great joy is announced to us because he who would liberate us from all those evils was coming into the world. The Physician comes to the sick, the Redeemer to the captives, the Way to the lost, the Life to the dead, salvation to the damned. Just as Moses was sent by the LORD in order to free the Israelite people from Egyptian slavery (Exodus 3:10), so also Christ was sent from the Father to deliver the entire human race from the captivity of the devil. Just as the dove returned to the ark with an olive leaf after the deluge of the world had dried up (Genesis 8:11), so also Christ came into the world to preach peace and reconciliation between God and man.

Let us therefore sing joyfully concerning his merits and comprehend the great mercy of God who loved us so much, even when we were still enemies (Romans 5:8). He did not disdain to assume our nature in a most strict union with his divinity. Why then would he reject those with whom he has been joined through participation in the flesh? Why would he ever hate his own flesh (Ephesians 5:29)? How then would that highest and infinite Mercy now be able to turn us away—those who have been made by him himself sharers in his own nature?

Who is able to take in the magnitude of this mystery with reason, let alone with words? There is the highest loftiness and baseness, the highest power and weakness, the highest majesty and frailty. What is loftier than God and baser than man? What is more powerful than God and weaker than man? What is more glorious than God and frailer than man? Nevertheless, that highest Power found a way by which to connect these since he required such a union with that highest Righteousness as a necessity.

Who is even able to perceive the magnitude of this mystery? He who also is equal with the infinite ransom that was required for man's offense because he was from the infinite good, namely, God, from whom man was turning away. But who was able to be equal to the infinite God? Therefore, the infinite righteousness

---

<sup>95</sup> The word can also mean “to attain.”

<sup>96</sup> Idea of word: “pry into,” “examine,” “cleave.”

himself obtained for them the equivalent ransom as God the Creator suffered in the flesh, lest in the flesh the creature should suffer in eternity. The infinite God was wounded. No one was able to intercede except the Mediator of infinite power. After all, what is above the infinite God? Thus, God Himself reconciled the world to himself (2 Corinthians 5:19). God himself is the Mediator. God himself redeemed the human race by his blood (Acts 20:28).<sup>97</sup>

Who is able to perceive the magnitude of this mystery? The highest Creator was offended and the creature did not show and concern<sup>98</sup> for either appeasement or reconciliation. For that reason he who was offended assumed the flesh of the creature in order to be the Reconciler. Man deserted God and turned himself to the devil and to enmity toward God. On the contrary, however, he who was deserted shows concern for his deserter and most graciously invites him to himself again. Man was withdrawing from that infinite Good and had fallen into infinite evil, but on the contrary, that infinite Good has paid the infinite price of redemption in order to free the creature from that infinite evil. Doesn't this infinite mercy exceed all the finite intellect and cogitation of man? Our nature has been made more glorious through Christ than it was made shameful through the sin of Adam. We receive more in Christ than we lost in Adam. Sin has abounded, but divine grace has abounded all the more (Romans 5:18, 21). In Adam, we lost innocence. In Christ, we received<sup>99</sup> full righteousness. Some marvel at divine power. All ought to marvel at divine benefits, although power and mercy are equal in God and both are of course infinite. Some marvel at creation, but it pleases me more to marvel at redemption, although both creation and redemption are actions of infinite power. It is a great work to create any man, especially when nothing is yet existing, but it still ought to be considered a greater work to redeem a man from evil and to receive in himself the satisfaction for man's debt.<sup>100</sup> It is marvelous that our flesh and bone have been formed for us by God. It is more marvelous still that God himself chose to become flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone (Ephesians 5:30).

O my soul, your God, who created you when you did not yet exist, who redeemed you when you were damned by sin, who has provided heavenly joy for you by clinging to you through faith in Christ, is gracious.

## **XVI. The spiritual refreshment of the pious.**

### **What is God to the soul? Light, medicine, food.**

The most blessed God has prepared a great feast, but the hungry heart must be brought to it (Luke 14:16). He who does not taste the goodness of the heavenly feast does not perceive it. He who does not hunger for it does not taste it. To believe in Christ is to approach the heavenly feast. No one, however, is able to believe unless he is truly crushed by knowledge of his sins, and repents of them. Contrition is spiritual hunger; faith is spiritual sustenance.

God gave the Israelites manna, the bread of angels, in the wilderness (Exodus 16:14). In this New Testament feast, God gives<sup>101</sup> us heavenly manna, that is, his grace, remission of sins, yes indeed his own Son, the Lord of angels. Christ is truly the bread of heaven, descended from heaven to give the world life (John 6:51). This world is filled with the husks of swine, its delight, and it did not desire that Goodness. Man did not perceive from the exterior what sweetness was inside. God gave them manna in the desert, that is, earthly food in that place, but all the consolation of the soul was removed from these earthly things.<sup>102</sup>

Those in the parable who had wives refused to come to the feast (Luke 14:20). Chaste virgins come to this feast, that is souls clinging neither to the devil through sin nor to the world through pleasures. "I have

<sup>97</sup> Alternate reading in some manuscripts of the original.

<sup>98</sup> Idea: we were not even concerned with doing this.

<sup>99</sup> Recipimus G.

<sup>100</sup> My translation may well be flawed. The Latin is as follows: *Magnum est hominem nihil quidquam meritum, quippe nondum existentem, creare; majus adhuc esse videtur hominem male meritum redimere et debiti satisfactionem in se recipere.*

<sup>101</sup> Nobis donat om. A.

<sup>102</sup> Read John 6, especially 51 and following, to follow Gerhard's train of thought.

promised you to one husband as a pure virgin,” says the apostle (2 Corinthians 11:2). Our soul must not indulge in spiritual adultery so that God is able to spiritually enter into a union with it. Those who had purchased a field and needed to see it declined to come (Luke 14:18). Those who love the pleasure of this world do not aspire to heavenly blessedness. Desire is the feet of the soul. Our soul does not come to this mystical feast if it does not desire it. The soul satisfied with the consolation of this world is not able to desire heavenly blessedness. When the rich young man was listening to Christ saying that he ought to desert his riches, he fell away on account of them because his soul was clinging to them. He went away sad. Christ, the Elijah of heaven, does not impart the oil of heavenly blessedness unless all the vessels have first been emptied (2 Kings 4:4). The love of God does not enter into a soul unless our self-love and the love of the world first leave. For where our treasure is, there is our heart (Matthew 6:21). If you have the world for your treasure, your heart is in the world. A man is joined with his love. If you love the earth, you are joined with the earth. A man changes into his love. If you love the world, you will become worldly. If you love heaven, you will be heavenly.

Those who bought and traded cattle did not come to Christ (Luke 14:19). Whoever clings to his own wealth in his heart does not seek heavenly riches (Psalm 62:11). The empty desire for earthly riches is not sufficient from the soul’s point of view, which must seek for fulfillment in God. Nor is anything that merely satisfies<sup>103</sup> the appetite truly sufficient. All earthly riches consist in creatures, in silver, in gold, in buildings, in pieces of land,<sup>104</sup> in herds. Certainly, no creature is actually able to satisfy our soul because our soul is more excellent than every creature. All creatures have indeed been established for us make use of them. How ill equipped creatures are to fulfill and satisfy our desires is apparent in death, in which all creatures desert us. It is extraordinary how much more steadfastly we cling to creatures when they so much more weakly and inconsistently adhere to us. Adam, when he turned himself away from the consolation of God and sought pleasure from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, was expelled from<sup>105</sup> paradise (Genesis 3:24). Our soul, if it turns itself from God to creatures, is deprived of heavenly consolation and inwardly prevented from partaking of the tree of life.

What is really able to restore those who neglect this feast? The world passes away and all who cling to it (1 John 2:17). Creatures pass away, and all who place their hope in them. The heavenly father swears that all those who prefer cattle, fields, wives—that is, whatever<sup>106</sup> is earthly—to the feast of heavenly blessedness are not going to taste the supper (Luke 14:24). After supper, no further food is prepared. When Christ is rejected, there is no other remedy that may heal. Those who hold him in contempt are punished with eternal hunger and live in eternal darkness. Whoever refuses to hear Christ calling, “Come to me all who labor and are heavy-laden,” will at last hear Him instructing them, “Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire” (Matthew 11:28; 25:41). The Sodomites were consumed in fire when they kept declining the invitation from Lot, calling to this feast (Genesis 19:24). For the duration of eternity, the fire of divine fury consumes those who spurn the call through the Gospel to come to this feast. In the meanwhile, the door was shut on the virgins whose lamps were running out of oil and who delayed coming to the Bridegroom for that reason (Matthew 25:10). Christ does not lead hearts that in this world have not been filled with the oil of the Holy Spirit to enter into his joy. Rather the door of forgiveness, of mercy, of consolation, of hope, of grace, of good works is closed on them.

The calling of Christ is internal. Blessed is he who listens to it (Revelation 3:20). Christ most often knocks at the door of our heart with holy desires, devout sighs, and pious thoughts. Blessed is the one who opens the door when he knocks. As soon as possible, when you feel the desire in your heart for some heavenly grace, resolve that it certainly is Christ knocking at your heart. Let him enter lest he depart, lest he afterward close the door of his mercy on you. As soon as possible, when you feel any little flame of pious meditation in the heart, judge it to be kindled by<sup>107</sup> the love of the divine, namely, the Holy Spirit. Fan and sustain that flame

---

<sup>103</sup> Plane *CDG*.

<sup>104</sup> Or, “estates.”

<sup>105</sup> E *om. G*.

<sup>106</sup> Quicunque *BCDG*.

<sup>107</sup> A *om. G*.

so that it may grow in love. Beware lest the Spirit be extinguished and the work of God impeded (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Whoever destroys the temple of God will experience the severity of his judgment (1 Corinthians 3:17). The temple of God is our heart. He who refuses to give a place in himself to the Holy Spirit, calling him through the Word, destroys that temple. In the Old Testament, the prophets were able to hear the inner speaking of the Lord (2 Peter 2:1). In the New Testament, all truly pious men and women feel those inner tugs and impulses of the Holy Spirit. Blessed are all those who hear and follow.

## **XVII. Concerning the fruits of Baptism.**

### **Baptism is a holy washing.**

Remember, faithful soul, the great grace granted you in the salutary washing of baptism. Baptism is a washing of regeneration (Titus 3:5). Whoever has therefore been moistened in the washing of baptism is no longer completely lost<sup>108</sup> in the former ways of his carnal birth. Rather, because he has been born of God, that is, through water and the Spirit (John 3:5), he is also a son of God, and because he is a son, he is also likewise an heir of eternal blessedness (Romans 14:17). Thus,<sup>109</sup> the eternal Father proclaimed the following words at Christ's baptism: "This is my beloved Son" (Matthew 3:17). Therefore, he adopts all who believe and are baptized as sons. In Christ's baptism, the Holy Spirit appeared as a dove. So also, the Holy Spirit is present in our baptism, giving it its power. Yes indeed, he confers himself to those who believe and effects a new impulse within them, so that they are as shrewd as serpents and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Just as he acted in creation, so also he acts in our own regeneration. In the beginning of creation, the Spirit of the Lord rested upon the waters and conferred upon them a vital power. So also, in the water of baptism the Holy Spirit is present and works to save us by this means of regeneration. Jesus Christ himself, our Savior, wished to be baptized in order to testify to us that we are made his members through baptism. Frequently medicine is applied to the head so that other members of the body may be healed. Our spiritual head is Christ. He received the baptismal medicine for the salvation of his mystical body.<sup>110</sup> In circumcision, God entered a covenant with his people in the Old Testament (Genesis 17:11). Similarly, we are received into the covenant of God in the New Testament through baptism since baptism has taken the place of circumcision (Colossians 2:11). Therefore, whoever is in the covenant of God should not fear the accusations of the devil. The Christian is clothed with Christ in baptism (Galatians 3:27). Hence, the saints are said to have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14). The righteousness of Christ is that most beautiful of clothing. Whoever has thus been clothed with this clothing should not fear the stain of sin.

There was a pool near the sheep gate<sup>111</sup> in Jerusalem. At a certain time, an angel used to descend and turn the waters of it. Whoever descended into it<sup>112</sup> first after the waters were turned was healed of whatever disease he had suffered from (John 5:2-4). The water of baptism is that pool which washes us from every sin and heals us from every disease when the Holy Spirit descends into it and turns it with the blood of Christ, who was made the [sacrificial] victim for us just as the sheep to be sacrificed were also washed in that pool in Jerusalem. At Christ's baptism, the heavens were opened. Likewise, in our baptism, the doors of heaven are opened. In Christ's baptism, the entire most holy Trinity was present (Matthew 3:16). So also, it is present in our baptism. And so, in the words of promise that are joined with the element of water, faith receives the grace of the Father who adopts<sup>113</sup> us, the merits of the Son who cleanses us, and the efficacy of the Holy Spirit who regenerates us.

<sup>108</sup> No verb is supplied in the Latin so I have added one to convey the sense of the sentence and help the reader track the thought.

<sup>109</sup> Ut *om. G.*

<sup>110</sup> In other words, us.

<sup>111</sup> The Latin simply says it was near the "*probaticam*," which the NIV and NKJV say was the Sheep Gate. The Greek has "προβατικῆ."

<sup>112</sup> In *eo A.*

<sup>113</sup> Et *interponunt CDG.*

When Pharaoh and all his armies were submerged<sup>114</sup> in the Red Sea, the Israelites were saved and passed through it unscathed (Exodus 14:28). Thus, in baptism, all the armies of sin are submerged and the faithful pass safely through to the promise of an inheritance of the heavenly kingdom. For this reason baptism is also like that sea of glass which John saw (Revelation 4:6). Through it, like through a glass, the splendor of the Son of Righteousness enters into our minds. That sea was before the throne of the Lamb. The throne of the Lamb is the Church, in which alone the grace of holy baptism is held. The prophet Ezekiel saw waters flowing from the temple, making all alive and healing them (Ezekiel 47:1). Likewise in God's spiritual temple, that is, in the Church, the saving waters of Baptism, in whose depths our sins are cast, still gush (Micah 7:19). All who come to this stream are healed and live. Baptism is the spiritual flood in which our sinful flesh is drowned. The unclean raven exits and the dove, the Holy Spirit, brings back the olive branch, that is, inspires peace and tranquility for the soul. Therefore, remember, faithful soul, this highest grace made yours in baptism and give due thanks to God.

Even more, the more plentiful the grace that has been conferred upon us through baptism, the more diligently we ought to guard that gift that has been given. "We have been buried with Christ through baptism into death so that, for that reason, just as Christ was raised from the dead in the glory of the Father we also will enter into a new life" (Romans 6:4). We were healed. Therefore, let us sin no more lest something more detrimental happen to us (John 5:14). We have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ, by far the most precious clothing there is. Therefore, let us not stain it with the blemish of sins. Our old man was crucified and died in baptism. Let the new man thus live. We have been regenerated and the attitude of our minds has been renewed in baptism (Ephesians 4:23). For this reason, do not let the flesh dominate the spirit. "The old has passed away. Behold, everything has been made new" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Let not the oldness of the flesh prevail upon the newness of the spirit. We have been made sons of God through spiritual regeneration. Let us then lead a life worthy of such a Father. We have been made the temple of the Holy Spirit. Let us thus prepare a hospitable seat for such a great guest. We have been received into the covenant of God. Let us therefore take care that we do not labor for the wage of the devil and thus be cut off from the grace of the covenant. Work all this in us, O blessed Trinity, one God, who has given such great grace in baptism, and grant that we may persevere in this great grace.

## **XVIII. Concerning the salutary participation in the body and blood of Christ.**

### **The flesh of Christ is the fountain of life.**

"Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives eternally," says Christ (John 6:54). Great in every way are the benefits of our Savior who not only assumed our flesh and carried it with him to his throne of heavenly glory, but also still feeds us with his body and blood for eternal life. O salutary food of our soul! O long awaited feast! O heavenly and angelic meal! Although angels desired to look into that great mystery (1 Peter 1:12), nevertheless he did not assume the seed of angels, but of Abraham (Hebrews 2:16). The Savior is closer kin to us than to the angels, for we have learned of that love that he gave to us by his Spirit, not only by his Spirit, but also by his body and blood. He thus indeed speaks the truth about the eucharistic bread and wine, "This is my body. This is my blood" (Matthew 26:26). How can the Lord forget those whom he has redeemed<sup>115</sup> with his own body and blood, whom he has nourished with his own body and blood? "Whoever eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ remains in Christ, and Christ remains in him" (John 6:56).

I therefore do not wonder exceedingly that the hairs of our head have been numbered (Matthew 10:30), that our names have been written in heaven (Luke 10:20), that we have been inscribed upon the palms of the hands of the Lord (Isaiah 49:16), or that we have been carried in his womb as by a mother (Isaiah 46:3) since we are nourished by the body and blood of Christ. The dignity of our souls is also great because they are

---

<sup>114</sup> Submergebantur *DG*.

<sup>115</sup> Quos suo corpore et sanguine redemit *om. G*.

nourished with the precious ransom of their redemption. Moreover, the dignity of our bodies is great because they are the habitation of our souls, redeemed and filled by the body of Christ, the temples of the Holy Spirit, and the domiciles<sup>116</sup> of the entire Most Holy Trinity. It is impossible that the same ones who have been nourished with the body and blood of our Lord—with that greatest<sup>117</sup> of meals—would remain in the grave. We eat him but we do not change him in our body. Rather we are changed in him. We are members of Christ and are filled with breath by his Spirit. We are nourished by his body and his blood.

“This is the bread which descended from heaven and gives life to the world. If anyone will eat of it, they will not hunger for all eternity” (John 6:33).<sup>118</sup> This is the bread of grace and mercy. All who eat of it will “taste and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:9), and “will receive grace upon grace from his fullness” (John 1:16). This is the bread of life that is not only living but makes alive. If anyone eats of this he will live forever (John 6:58). This bread has descended from heaven and is not only itself heavenly but also makes those partaking of it partakers of the heavenly feast. Whoever eats of this feast with faith and in the Spirit will become heavenly because they will not die but will be resuscitated in the Last Day. They will not be revived for judgment in the Last Day because whoever eats from this bread will not come to judgment or to damnation since there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Rather, they will be revived for life and salvation (Romans 8:1). “Whoever indeed eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks his blood will have life in him and will live because of Christ” (John 6:54,57). His flesh is real food and his blood is real drink (John 6:55). Therefore, let us not satisfy ourselves on our own works but with the Lord’s food. Let us not become inebriated with the abundance of our own house but with that of the house of the Lord (Psalm 36:9).<sup>119</sup>

Christ is the true fountain of life.<sup>120</sup> Whoever drinks of that water will have a fountain of water springing up within them into eternal life (John 4:14). All who thirst come to these waters; and those who have no money come, buy, and eat (Isaiah 55:1). Let all who thirst come. Come also you, my soul, thirsting and harassed by the heat of my sins. But if you are destitute, lacking the currency of merits, hasten all the more to him. Destitute,<sup>121</sup> without your own merits, hasten all the more ardently to the merits of Christ. Hasten, therefore, and buy without money. This is the bedroom of Christ and of the soul, from which sins do not deter us and into which merits do not enter. What are our merits even able to do for us? “Why do you spend money on what is not bread and labor for what does not satisfy?” says the prophet (Isaiah 55:2). Our labors do not satisfy, nor does the currency of our merits buy divine grace. Hear then, my soul, “and eat what is good and delight in fatness” (Isaiah 55:2). These words that I speak are Spirit and life and the words of eternal life (John 6:63). “The cup we bless is a participation<sup>122</sup> in the blood of Christ. The bread which we break is a participation in the body of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 10:16). We cling to the Lord. Therefore, we are one spirit with him. We are united<sup>123</sup> with him not only by a communion in nature<sup>124</sup> but also by a participation in his body and blood. For this reason, I do not say with the Jews, “How can this one give us his flesh for eating?” (John 6:52). Rather I exclaim, “How does the Lord distribute his flesh to us for eating and his blood for drinking!” I do not probe<sup>125</sup> into his power but rather marvel at his benevolence. I do not scrutinize his majesty but rather venerate his kindness. I believe in the presence. I am not concerned with the mode of his presence.<sup>126</sup> Although, I know it is most certainly in the closest and most intimate manner. We are members of his body, flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone (Ephesians 5:30). He lives in us and we in him.

---

<sup>116</sup> *Sunt add. G.*

<sup>117</sup> *cibus mirabilis G.*

<sup>118</sup> This quote borrows loosely from the general passage and not from this verse alone.

<sup>119</sup> Psalm 36:8 in English.

<sup>120</sup> Psalm 36:9 in the English would apply here.

<sup>121</sup> *Destitute G.*

<sup>122</sup> Or, as we say, a communion in the body and blood.

<sup>123</sup> *Utimur ABCD.*

<sup>124</sup> A shared human nature.

<sup>125</sup> *Mirror CDG.*

<sup>126</sup> Or, “I do not know...”

In this most profound abyss of thought my soul desires to be submerged. My soul cannot find words with which to profess or declare that goodness. Rather, I am deeply astonished by the immeasurable grace of the Lord, by the glory destined<sup>127</sup> for the saints.

## **XIX. Concerning the mystery of the Lord's Supper.**

**To marvel, not to probe, is true wisdom.**

In the holy Supper of the Lord a mystery worthy of trembling adoration is placed before us. There is the treasury and sacristy of divine grace. We know that God planted the tree of life so that its fruit would preserve our first parents and their offspring in the blessedness of immortality in which he created them. The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was also situated in paradise, but indeed<sup>128</sup> the former and the latter, one which was given by God for their salvation and life and the other for the exercising of their obedience, became an occasion for their death and damnation when they pathetically chose to acquiesce to Satan's luring as well as to their own selves. In turn, in this Supper we have the true tree of life made available, that sweet tree whose leaves are for medicine and whose fruit is for salvation (Ezekiel 47:12). Its sweetness takes away the bitterness of every evil and indeed even of death.

The Israelites were given manna so that they were nourished with a heavenly meal. This Supper is that true manna which descended from heaven in order to give life to the world. This is the bread of heaven, that food of angels, "of which if anyone eats he will not hunger" (John 6:35,51). The Israelites had the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy Seat where they were able to hear God talking to them face to face<sup>129</sup> (Exodus 25:21). Here is the real Ark of the Covenant, the most holy body of Christ, in which all the treasures of wisdom and understanding are concealed from scientific knowledge (Colossians 2:3).<sup>130</sup> Here is<sup>131</sup> the real mercy seat, the blood of Christ (Romans 3:25) that made us beloved<sup>132</sup> in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6).

Not only does Christ speak words of internal consolation to us, but he also dwells in us, not feeding us with heavenly manna but with himself. Here is the real gate to heaven and ladder of angels (Genesis 28:12). For indeed, is he who is in heaven not much greater than<sup>133</sup> heaven itself? Is heaven more intimately united with God than God's own flesh and human nature that he has assumed? Yes, heaven is indeed the throne of God, but the Holy Spirit rests in the human nature assumed by Christ (Isaiah 66:1). God is in heaven, but in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Deity [bodily] (Colossians 2:9).<sup>134</sup> Surely, this fact is a great and<sup>135</sup> infallible pledge of our salvation. He certainly could not give us a greater pledge, having nothing greater to give. For what indeed is greater than himself? What can be more intimately united with him than his own human nature that he has assumed, which has been brought into the fellowship of the most blessed Trinity and has been made the treasury of all the blessings of heaven? What indeed is united as intimately with him as his flesh and blood? If with this real heavenly food he restores us miserable little worms and makes us participants in his own nature, how then will he not also make us participants in his grace? Who has ever hated for his own flesh? (Ephesians 5:29) How then will the Lord be able to despise us whom he nourishes with his own flesh and blood? How will he forget those to whom he has given the pledge of his own body? How will Satan be able to overcome us when we are refreshed with a heavenly meal and equipped for battle?

---

<sup>127</sup> Or "in view for the saints."

<sup>128</sup> Enim *om. G.*

<sup>129</sup> Literally, mouth to mouth.

<sup>130</sup> Scientia.

<sup>131</sup> Est *om. G.*

<sup>132</sup> Or, "God has accepted us in the Beloved One."

<sup>133</sup> Is *add. BCDG.*

<sup>134</sup> The point of the passage includes this bodily dwelling as expressed in the verse cited.

<sup>135</sup> Et *om. CDG.*



Christ holds us dear because he has bought us at a dear price. He holds us dear because he feeds us with that which is dear and precious. He holds us dear because we are of his own flesh and we are his members. This is the only heal-all<sup>136</sup> of spiritual death; this is the remedy for death.<sup>137</sup> What sin could indeed be so great that the holy blood of God could not pay for it?<sup>138</sup> What sin could be so great that the vivifying flesh of Christ could not heal it? What could be so deadly that the death of the Son of God could not remove it? What flaming darts of the devil could be so fatal that they could not be extinguished in this fountain of divine grace? What conscience could be stained so much that this blood could not cleanse it? The Lord was present with the Israelites in a cloud and fire (Exodus 13:21). Here is surely no cloud but the Sun of Righteousness himself (Malachi 4:2), the Light of our souls in person. Here is no fire of divine fury, but the fervor of love is felt, not receding from us, but building its mansion within us (John 14:23).

The first parents were introduced into paradise, that most fragrant and pleasant garden—a type of the eternal blessedness—in order that, admonished by divine kindness, they might furnish due obedience to their Creator. Behold, there is more than paradise in this place. Indeed, the creature is fed with the flesh of its Creator. The repentant conscience is cleansed by the blood of the Son of God. The members of the head, Christ, are nourished with the body of Christ. The faithful soul is fed at the divine and heavenly feast. The holy flesh of God, which the angels adore in the unity of the persons, which archangels venerate, before which rulers tremble and powers marvel, that same flesh is our spiritual nourishment. Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad (Psalm 96:11), even more the faithful soul to whom such a great and important gift has been extended.

## **XX. Concerning earnest preparation before the use of the Holy Supper.**

### **Be a careful guest of Christ.**

This Supper is not some sort of common meal or the banquet of some king, but it is the most holy mystery of the body and blood of Christ offered<sup>139</sup> to us as we celebrate it. A worthy preparation is therefore most certainly required lest we come upon death instead of life, receiving judgment instead of mercy.

How greatly the most holy patriarch trembles, how greatly he fears in the remarkable strength of his faith when the Son of God himself appears to him in human form and pronounces the coming destruction<sup>140</sup> of Sodom (Genesis 18:2)! Here the Lamb of God is presented, not to be speculatively investigated, but to be eaten and drunk. When Uzziah thoughtlessly approached the Ark of the Covenant [to burn incense], he was immediately struck with leprosy by the Lord (2 Chronicles 26:16). What surprise is it then if he who eats from this bread and drinks from this wine unworthily eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:29)? Here indeed is the ark of the New Covenant, which that old ark prefigured. The apostle shows in one word what is real preparation. “Let a man examine himself, and in this way let him eat from this bread” (1 Corinthians 11:28). However, as with every divine examination, so also in this case Paul requires that it must be carried out according to the norm of Holy Scripture.

Let us therefore consider our infirmity in the first place. What is man? Dust and ashes (Genesis 18:27). We are born from the earth. We live from the earth. We will be returned into the earth. What is man? Stinking seed, a sack of dung, and food for worms. Man is born for work, not for honor. Man is born from a woman and for that reason is born with punishable guilt. He lives a brief time and this he lives in fear, full of much misery and therefore also with many tears (Job 14:1). Yes with much real misery because of both the body and the soul. Man is unaware of his beginning and of his end. We are like the plants of summer that soon wither since our life is also short and has many pains and labors that are anything but brief.

<sup>136</sup> Panacea was a plant that was supposed to heal every disease.

<sup>137</sup> This last phrase is in the Greek, *της αθανασιας φαρμακον*, cited as

Ignat. (Ignatius?), which means absolutely nothing to me.

<sup>138</sup> Here there is a citation for “Eph. 11.” I do not know what chapter this is referring to.

<sup>139</sup> Proponitur *om. A.*

<sup>140</sup> Evertere velle *A.*

Let us now consider our unworthiness in the second place. Every creature is certainly a shadow, a dream, nothing in respect to the Creator (Psalm 39:7).<sup>141</sup> This is no less true of man. But man is unworthy in more numerous and more serious ways. By his sins he has truly offended his Creator. God is righteous by nature and essence. What are we but kindling for that consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24)? How can the most intolerable stench of our deeds stand in his presence? God, how can our iniquities that you placed before you, and our errors that you place in the light of your face, stand in your presence (Psalm 90:9).<sup>142</sup> God is always infinite, as is his justice and anger. But if he is completely great and worthy of awe in all his works, he is also completely great and worthy of awe in his anger, justice, and vengeance.<sup>143</sup> Will he who did not spare his own Son then spare creation? Will he who did not spare the Most Holy One then spare the wicked servant? God's hatred for sin is so great that he even punishes it in his most beloved, as is seen in the case of Lucifer, the prince of angels.

Yet, let us not only consider ourselves in this examination, but also this blessed bread which is a participation in the body of Christ. Then we will see it as a real fountain of grace and an inexhaustible spring of mercy. By all means, the Lord is not able to deny us whom he has made participants in his flesh. Who indeed is ever able to hate his own flesh (Ephesians 5:29)? So also, this holy banquet will transform our soul. This most divine feast will make us divine men, until we at long last are made partakers of the future blessedness "taking hold of all the fullness of God and being of all his likeness alone."<sup>144</sup> That which we have here by faith and mysteriously, there we will have concretely and for all to see. These bodies of ours that are now the temples of the Holy Spirit and are made alive and holy by the body and blood of Christ inhabiting them will obtain<sup>145</sup> the following dignity: in them we will be able to see God face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). This most holy medicine heals all the wounds of sin. This life-giving flesh overwhelms every mortal sin. This is the most holy sign of divine promises, which we are able to point to in the presence of the divine judge. This is the all-sufficient pledge of eternal life in which we glory. If the body and blood of Christ are displayed for us in this way, we will certainly also take part<sup>146</sup> in the benefits of that most holy body and blood. How will he who has given us the greater blessings then refuse to give us the lesser ones?<sup>147</sup> "He who gave his own Son for us, how will he not with him also give us all things" (Romans 8:32)?

Be glad then, O bride, for the time when you will be beckoned to the marriage ceremony with the Lamb is at hand (Revelation 19:7). Clothe yourself with precious things. Receive the wedding dress lest he find you uncovered (Matthew 22:12). That<sup>148</sup> dress is the righteousness of the Bridegroom that we put on in baptism. Our righteousness is completely unacceptable as a wedding dress since it is certainly like the menstrual rags of a woman (Isaiah 64:6). Let us therefore dread being brought to that most solemn nuptial banquet of the Lamb in those shameful and stinking robes of our own works. Clothe us, Lord, lest we be found naked (2 Corinthians 5:3).

## **XXI. Concerning Christ's ascension.**

### **It is ours to ascend with Christ.**

<sup>141</sup> Psalm 39:6 in the English.

<sup>142</sup> Psalm 90:8 in the English.

<sup>143</sup> In *om. BCDG*.

<sup>144</sup> Nazianz. Orat. 4. de theol. is the citation. The Greek is:  
is far from definitive, and, in fact, needs improvement, no doubt.

s. My translation

<sup>145</sup> *Consecuta A.*

<sup>146</sup> *Parata A.*

<sup>147</sup> The text is amended to this reading in a footnote from the reading in the text that is as follows: "qui minora dedit, majora denegabit?" That reading obviously makes no sense whatsoever.

<sup>148</sup> *Est add. G.*

Reflect, faithful soul, on the ascension of your Bridegroom. Christ has removed his visible bodily presence from among his faithful in order that faith may have exercise; for blessed are they who have not seen and yet believe (John 20:29). Where our treasure is, there our heart will be also (Matthew 6:21). Christ our treasure is in heaven. “Therefore let us set our hearts on heavenly things and set our minds on things above” (Colossians 3:2). The bride awaits the return of the Bridegroom with most ardent sighs. Therefore, let the faithful soul always eagerly expect her Bridegroom to come on that Day in which she will enter into marriage with the Lamb (Revelation 19:7). Let her trust in the pledge of the Holy Spirit, whom the Lord relinquished to her when he ascended.<sup>149</sup> Let her trust in the body and blood of the Lord that is received in the mysterious Supper and let her believe that our bodies, satisfied in this meal, will at long last be raised to incorruptibility. Since we now believe, we will then see, and our hope will then be a reality. The Lord is present with us in the form of a stranger in our path here [as with the Emmaus disciples], but in the lodging of the heavenly fatherland we will know him and will gaze upon him (Luke 24:15).

Our Savior wished to ascend from the Mount of Olives. An olive is a sign of peace and joy. Thus, it is fitting that he who by his passion brought forth tranquility for our consciences—terrified and paralyzed with fear—ascended from the Mount of Olives. It is only fitting that he who is received into the highest heavens to the jubilation of the heavenly curia should ascend from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:12). That mountain calls us to heavenly things. Let us follow with holy desires since we are not able to follow with the feet of our bodies. Moses similarly ascended a mountain to the Lord (Exodus 19:3). On a holy mountain, the patriarchs worshipped. Abraham chose the mountains, but Lot chose the plains (Genesis 13:11). Let the faithful soul abandon the plains of the world and<sup>150</sup> strive in devotion for the holy mountains of heaven. Thus she will feel within her the most sweet words of conversation with God; thus in prayer she will be able to worship in spirit (John 4:24); thus she will escape with Abraham the eternal flames prepared for the plain dwellers of the world.

Bethany symbolizes the village of humility and affliction through which the kingdom of heaven, which we approach, is accessible, just as Christ also entered into heavenly joy through this village of affliction (Luke 24:50). Thus far, heaven had appeared closed and paradise guarded by the flaming sword above it (Genesis 3:24), but now Christ the victor has opened heaven so that he may point out to us the way into our heavenly fatherland from which we had been excluded. As the disciples stood there gazing at heavens with their eyes from below (Acts 1:11), so also let all real disciples of Christ lift up the eyes of their hearts for the contemplation of heavenly things.

O Lord Jesus, with what glory your passion was concluded! What a blessed and unexpected change has occurred! In what manner of suffering I saw you on Mount Calvary and in what a different manner I now behold<sup>151</sup> you on the Mount of Olives! There you were alone. Here you are accompanied by many thousands of angels. There you were ascending onto a cross. Here you ascend into the clouds and to heaven. There you were crucified between thieves. Here you rejoice with the choirs of angels. There you were affixed to a cross with nails and condemned. Here you are free and the Liberator of the condemned. There you were dying and suffering. Here rejoicing and triumphing.

Christ is our Head. We are his members (Ephesians 5:30). Rejoice then and exult in the ascension of your Head, faithful soul. The glory of the Head is likewise also the glory of the members. Where our flesh reigns we believe that we too are to reign. Where our blood rules we hope for future glory. Although our sins would prohibit this, our participation in his nature nevertheless overcomes them. Where the Head is, there also the remaining members will be. Our Head entered into heaven and therefore the remaining members have a most reasonable reason to hope for heaven, yet not only this but also<sup>152</sup> now to receive a possession in heaven as well. Christ descended from heaven in order to redeem us. He ascended again into heaven in order to glorify us. He was born for us. He suffered for us. Therefore, he also ascended for us. Our love is founded upon the passion of Christ, our faith upon his resurrection, our hope upon his ascension.

<sup>149</sup> Descendens A.

<sup>150</sup> Si DG.

<sup>151</sup> Sic AB. Conspicior C. conspicio DG.

<sup>152</sup> Et om. CDG.

However, we ought to follow our Bridegroom not only with burning desires but also with good works. Nothing that would defile it may enter into that heavenly city (Revelation 21:27). As a sign of this reality the angels appeared, coming out of the heavenly Jerusalem and clothed in white robes denoting purity and innocence. Arrogance may not ascend with the Master, humility or malice with the Author of goodness, or discord with Prince of peace, or lust and luxury with the Son of the Virgin. Corruption may not ascend after the Parent of virtue, nor may sins after the righteous One, nor are infirmities able to come after the Physician. Whoever<sup>153</sup> desires to enter into the presence of God some day, let him now live worthily in his sight. Whoever hopes for heaven, let him despise the world. Draw our hearts to you, good Jesus.

## **XXII. A homily concerning the Holy Spirit.**

### **God seals His elect with a Holy Breath.**

Once our Lord ascended into heaven and entered into his glory, he sent the Holy Spirit to his disciples on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1). Just as God himself descended in the Old Testament to make the law known to Moses on Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:3), so also the Holy<sup>154</sup> Spirit descended to the apostles when<sup>155</sup> the Gospel was to be proclaimed throughout the earth by the apostles. The most intense thunder and lightning and the shout of the trumpet took place there because the law detonates against our disobedience and proves us guilty of divine wrath. Yet, here [Pentecost] the rumbling, soft sound of the wind is heard because the message of the Gospel lifts up our confused minds. At Sinai, trembling and terror seized all the people because the law worked wrath (Romans 4:15). At Pentecost, all of the multitude gathered and heard the marvelous things of God, because the way to God lies open through the Gospel. At Sinai Jehovah descended in fire, but in the fire of wrath and of fury, so that the mountain quaked and fumed. At Pentecost Jehovah, the Holy Spirit, likewise descended in fire, but in the fire of love and of tenderness, so that the house was not shaken by divine wrath but rather filled with all the glory of the Holy Spirit. What surprise is it if the Holy Spirit is sent from heaven to sanctify when the Son has already been sent to liberate? The passion of Christ benefits<sup>156</sup> no one unless it is announced to the world through the Gospel. What indeed is the use of a hidden treasure? For this reason the most gracious Father not only prepared a great benefit by the passion of his Son, but he has also wished to offer it to the entire world through the procession of the Holy Spirit. The faithful mother offers both her breasts to the tender child. The faithful God sends both his Son and Holy Spirit for us wretches.

The Holy Spirit came over the apostles when they were abiding of one mind in prayer. Prayer is indeed of the Spirit; the Spirit is laid hold of through prayer and the Spirit leads us to pray (Zechariah 12:10). Why? Because he is the bond through which our hearts are united with God, just as he unites the Son with the Father and the Father with the Son. He is indeed the substance of the mutual love between the Father and the Son. This spiritual union of ours with God is by faith. Faith however is the gift of the Spirit, laid hold of through prayers, but real prayers are in the Spirit.<sup>157</sup> In Solomon's temple, when the Lord was worshipped with incense, the glory of the Lord filled the temple (1 Kings 8:11). So also, if the fragrance of prayer is offered to God, the temple of your heart is filled with the glory of the Holy Spirit. The Father promises to lend his ear to our prayer (Psalm 50:15). The Son intercedes for us (Romans 8:34). The Holy Spirit prays in and through us (Galatians 4:6). The angels bring our prayers to God and therefore the entire heavenly curia has been opened for our prayers. The merciful God gives to us the inclination to prayer because he gives us the Spirit of grace and prayer (Tobit

---

<sup>153</sup> Quis G.

<sup>154</sup> Sanctus om. A.

<sup>155</sup> Corrtg. Videtur ad.

<sup>156</sup> Prodesset BCDG.

<sup>157</sup> That is, they are prompted by the Spirit.

12:12).<sup>158</sup> He also puts our prayers into effect because he always hears them, maybe not according to our will but always according to our need.

The Holy Spirit came when they all were staying together in one place and with one mind. Undoubtedly, he is the Spirit of love and like-mindedness. He joins us to Christ through faith, to God through love, and to our neighbor through affection. The devil, the author of discord and separation, separates us from God by sins. Through hatred, contention, and disputes, he separates men from each other. But the Holy Spirit, just as he unites the divine and human natures in Christ by his overshadowing (Luke 1:35), so also the Holy Spirit unites man to God and<sup>159</sup> God to man by the effusion of his gifts in us. So long as the Holy Spirit remains in a man with his grace and his gifts, the man will remain united with God. As soon as a man casts out faith and love by sin, and sends away the Holy Spirit in this way, he is separated from God and that most blessed union is removed.

Whoever has the Holy Spirit does not hate his brother. Why? Because through the Spirit he becomes a participant in the mystical body of Christ, of which all the pious are members (Ephesians 5:29). Who indeed is able to hate his own members? For this reason, whoever is ruled by the Spirit also loves his enemies. Why?<sup>160</sup> Because whoever clings to God is of one spirit with him (1 Corinthians 6:17). Surely, God makes the sun rise over both the good and the evil, and he hates nothing whatsoever that he has made (Matthew 5:45; Wisdom 11:25). Whoever has the Spirit of God is consequently prepared to serve in every way, works for the good of men in every way, and makes himself the servant of all, because God also is the fountain of all mercy and grace for all. Now the Holy Spirit truly works his own personal impulses in a man. Just as the soul makes the body alive, perceptive, and mobile, so also the Spirit makes man spiritual, filling the mind with the sweetest goodness of the divine, and leads all the members into obedience to God and concern for his neighbor.

That thunder that is a symbol of the Holy Spirit came from heaven because this Spirit is of a holy nature—undoubtedly of the same essence as the Father and the Son, proceeding from the Father and the Son from eternity. He also causes men to contemplate heavenly things and to seek the things that are found above. Whoever clings to the world and is united with a love for this world, that one has not yet been made a participant in the heavenly Spirit. He who supplies living consolation to the afflicted came in the symbol of a breath because by the reciprocal breathing in and out of air we live bodily. He who grants that we may live according to our better part came under the symbol of respiration and of a breath. “The wind blows where it will and you hear its sound, but you are ignorant of where it comes from and where it will go. So also it is for all who are born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). It made perfect sense that he who proceeds by a breath from the Father and the Son from eternity came under the symbol of a breath. This breath was vigorous because it is the deliberate and exertive grace of the Holy Spirit. This Holy Spirit moves the pious in whom he dwells to every good thing, and therefore also moves them so that they do not pay attention to the threats of tyrants, the traps of Satan, or the hatred of the world (Romans 8:14).<sup>161</sup> He conferred upon the apostles the gift of tongues because their sound ought to go out into all the world (Psalm 19:5),<sup>162</sup> and therefore the confusion of languages, which was a punishment for the arrogant and reckless builders of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11:7), was in this way overcome, and now those scattered peoples are brought into one faith by the gift of various tongues from the Holy Spirit. It is fitting that he by whom the words of the holy men of God were inspired (2 Peter 1:21), who was speaking in the apostles, who places the words of God into the mouths of the Church’s ministers, came under the figure of tongues.

For such great gifts this Holy Spirit, along with the Father and the Son, ought to be praised and blessed forever and ever.

<sup>158</sup> As in other places, Gerhard employs an apocryphal writing, not as authoritative in and of itself, but because it conforms with the truth of Scripture in this area. I believe 12:15 (in the English and the Latin), and not 12:12, may be what Gerhard has in mind.

<sup>159</sup> Et *om. A.*

<sup>160</sup> Quare? *Om. CDG.*

<sup>161</sup> Romans 8:13 fits with the train of thought as well.

<sup>162</sup> Psalm 19:4 in the English. As usual, Gerhard is following the Hebrew (this is 18:5 in the Vulgate).

## XXIII. Concerning the dignity of the Church.

### The Church is the Bride of Christ.

Contemplate, devout soul, how much benefit God has furnished for you, since He has called you into the consortium of His Church. “My love is one,” the Bridegroom says in the song (Song of Solomon 6:8).<sup>163</sup> It is certainly one for there is one true and orthodox Church, the beloved bride of Christ. The Spirit of Christ is not found outside of the body of Christ. Whoever does not yet have the Spirit of Christ is not his (Romans 8:9). Whoever is not Christ’s, is not able to become a participant in eternal life. All outside of Noah’s ark were forced to perish in the flood. Outside of the spiritual ark of the Church, all are destined for eternal destruction. Whoever does not have the Church as his mother on the earth will not have God as his Father in heaven. Contemplate, devout soul, how many thousands of souls descend into hell every day because they are outside of the bosom of the Church. It is not your nature that differentiates you from them, but only the grace of the merciful God. When the Egyptians were enveloped in complete darkness, the Israelites alone were in the light (Exodus 10:23). So also, only in<sup>164</sup> the Church is the light of the knowledge of the divine found. Whoever is outside of the Church passes from the darkness of ignorance in this present life into the darkness of damnation in the subsequent life. Whoever does not have a share in the Church militant will never have a share in the Church triumphant. The following things are indeed most intimately joined: God, the Word, faith, Christ, the Church, and eternal life.

The holy Church of God is a mother, a virgin, and a bride. She is a mother because every day she gives birth to spiritual sons for God. She is a virgin because she keeps herself blameless from any association with the devil and the world. She is a bride because Christ has betrothed her to himself by an eternal covenant and given her the pledge of the Spirit. The Church is that ship that carries Christ and his disciples (Matthew 8:23) and transports us at long last to the port of eternal blessedness. The Church navigates her established course through the sea of this age with the rudder of faith, having God as her pilot, angels for oarsmen, and the company of all the saints for her passengers. In the middle of her, her mast is the cross of salvation, on which is suspended the sail of the evangelical faith, by which she is lead by the breath of the Holy Spirit to the security of eternal rest. The Church is that vine that God has planted in the field of this world, watered with His own blood, surrounded with the protection of angels, having constructed the winepress of his own passion in her, having removed the stones and offensive things from her. The Church is that woman clothed with the sun (Revelation 12:1) because she is clothed with Christ’s righteousness. She tramples the moon underfoot because she despises the world, which is subject to manifold changes.

Contemplate, devout soul, this dignity of the Church and give the thanks owed to God. Indeed, the benefits that God grants through the Church are great, but they are not obvious to everyone. It is like a closed garden and a sealed fountain (Song of Solomon 4:12). Therefore, no one recognizes these highest blessings in the Church unless he himself is in it. This bride of Christ is black on the outside, but beautiful inside (Song of Solomon 1:5).<sup>165</sup> Certainly all the glory of the daughter of the king is inside (Psalm 45:14).<sup>166</sup> This ship is struck with various storms of persecution (Matthew 8:25). This vine is lifted up by being bound and enlarged by being cut back (John 15:2). The infernal dragon himself plots against this woman in many ways (Revelation 12:7). The Church is as beautiful as a lily, but a lily between thorns (Song of Solomon 2:1). The most beautiful garden is the Church, but only when the north wind of tribulation blows through it do its aromatic spices at last flow out. The daughter of God is the Church, but she is completely hated by the world. She expects a heavenly inheritance. Forced to live as a foreigner in this world, opposed in her sojourn, silent in suppression, courageous in silence, she conquers in fortitude. The Church is the spiritual mother, but she is forced to stand under the

<sup>163</sup> Song of Solomon 6:9 in the English.

<sup>164</sup> In *om. CDG*.

<sup>165</sup> The Song of Solomon passage is more clearly understood if the preceding and following verses are considered as well.

<sup>166</sup> See vs. 13 as well.

cross, just as Mary, from whom Christ was born into this world, was standing under the cross (John 19:25). The Church is a palm tree because she grows all the more under the weight of tribulation and temptation.<sup>167</sup>

Contemplate, devout soul, the dignity of the Church, and beware lest you engage in anything unworthy of her. The Church is a mother, so beware lest you despise her voice. She is a mother, so you ought always to cling to her breasts. The Church's breasts are the Word and Sacraments. The Church is a virgin. If then you are really her son, abstain from the embraces of the world. You are a member of the virgin. See to it that you do not associate the members of the virgin with prostitutes and with Satan through sin. You are the bride of Christ. See that you do not send away the pledge of the Holy Spirit that has been given to you. You are the bride of Christ. Pray without ceasing so that the Bridegroom may hurry to bring you into the heavenly marriage banquet. For the Bridegroom may come in the safety of the night. Be vigilant therefore lest the Bridegroom will come and find you sleeping and close to you the door of eternal salvation (Matthew 25:10). Shine with the oil of your faith, lest in the coming of the Bridegroom you may be forced to wish for it in vain. You have been carried in a ship. See that you do not throw yourself into the sea of the world (Matthew 8:25) before you arrive at port. You have been carried in a ship. Pray, lest you be absorbed by storms of affliction and the waves of temptation.<sup>168</sup> You are called into the Lord's vineyard (Matthew 20:1). See that you labor strenuously. Let the thought of the denarii ease the labors of the day. You are the vine of the Lord. Throw away all the worthless branches, all the fruitless works of the flesh. Regard all the time of your life as a time of pruning. You are a branch in the true vine (John 15:1). See to it that you remain in it and bear much fruit, because the heavenly farmer takes away the branches that do not bear fruit and purifies them, in order that they may bear more copious fruit. You have clothed yourself by faith (Galatians 3:27) and you have been covered with the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2; Revelation 12:1). See to it then that you tread the moon, that is, all earthly things underfoot and esteem all these things lightly in respect to the good things of heaven.

O good Jesus, who has led us into the Church militant, lead us also at long last into that Church triumphant.

## XXIV. Meditation concerning predestination.

### Election is made in Christ.

Devout soul, as often as you think about your predestination, behold Christ suspended on the cross, dying for the sins of the whole world, rising for our justification (Romans 4:25). Begin with Christ lying in a manger. Then proceed in the right order and only then to the last place, to a treatment of predestination.

God has elected us before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4), but that election has nevertheless been made in Christ. If then you are in Christ through faith, do not doubt that election extends to you as well. If the firm faith of your heart clings to Christ, do not doubt that you are among the number of the elect. If, however, you wish to *a priori*<sup>169</sup> scrutinize the profundity of predestination outside the limits of the Word of God, it must be greatly feared that you will fall into profound desperation. Outside of Christ, God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24). Beware then, lest you draw too near to this fire, lest you be consumed. Outside the satisfaction of Christ, God accuses all with the voice of his law; he damns all. Beware therefore lest you derive the mystery of predestination from the law.

Do not<sup>170</sup> search out all of the reasons of divine counsels nor let them seduce many of your thoughts. "God lives in inaccessible light" (1 Timothy 6:16). Do not try to approach him<sup>171</sup> without fear. Yet, he has indeed revealed the light of the Gospel to us. In this, you are able to safely inquire into this hidden doctrine, and in this light you will see the true light (Psalm 36:10). Abandon the profundity of this decree made from eternity

<sup>167</sup> *Tentatio* is a unique, hard to translate Latin word, which can be rendered temptation.

<sup>168</sup> Absorbeatur A.

<sup>169</sup> According to human reason or experience.

<sup>170</sup> Ne G.

<sup>171</sup> Eum G. I followed this reading. The other reading would read, "Do not approach it [the doctrine]..."

and turn your attention to the clear manifestations revealed in time. Justification, having been accomplished in time, is a mirror of election, having been made without time. Recognize from the law the wrath of God on account of sin, and bring forth repentance. Recognize from the Gospel the mercy of God on account of the merit of Christ, and appropriate it to yourself by faith. Recognize the true nature of faith and demonstrate it through pious conversation. Recognize in the cross God's fatherly castigations and endure it<sup>172</sup> with patience. Then you may finally begin to handle the doctrine of predestination. The method of the apostle demonstrates this point. Let the true disciple of the apostle follow this method as well. There are three things that always must be observed in this mystery: the mercy the loving God, the merit of the suffering Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit calling us through the Gospel.

The mercy of God is universal<sup>173</sup> because he loved all the world (John 3:16). "The world is full of the mercy of the Lord" (Psalm 33:5). For this reason God's mercy is indeed greater than heaven and earth—it is just as great as God is (Sirach 2:23) for God is love (1 John 4:16). He has testified in his own Word that he wants no one dead (Ezekiel 33:11). If this were insufficient, he also confirmed it with an oath. If you are not able to believe God when he promises, at least believe on account of the fact that he took an oath concerning your salvation. He is called the Father of Mercies (2 Corinthians 1:3) because he, by his very nature, has mercy and he pardons. The cause and origin of the demonstration of mercy is in God's own nature. Judging and avenging are foreign to him. Thus mercy more than punishment is seen to proceed from his heart.

The merits of Christ are also universal because he suffered for the sins of all the world (1 John 2:2).<sup>174</sup> What then is able to demonstrate the mercy of God more plainly than the fact that he loved us when we did not yet exist, for it is out of God's love that we have been created. He furthermore loved us when we were enemies. It was out of love that he gave the Son for our redemption (Romans 5:8).

To the sinner sentenced to eternal torment and unable to redeem himself from that sentence, God the Father says, "Take my one and only Son and give him for yourself." The Son himself says, "Take me and redeem yourself." Christ is the flower of the field (Song of Solomon 2:1), not of the garden, because the fragrance of His grace is not restricted to a select few but is open to all. And lest you doubt the universality of his merits Christ was praying for the ones crucifying him as he suffered and was shedding his blood<sup>175</sup> for the very ones who themselves were shedding his<sup>176</sup> blood (Luke 23:34).

The promises of the Gospel are also universal because Christ says to all, "Come to me, all who labor" (Matthew 11:28). What has been performed<sup>177</sup> for all is also offered to all. As many good things as he has extended to the pilgrim through faith, that many you will obtain. God denies his grace to no one except the one who judges himself unworthy of it.<sup>178</sup>

Therefore, faithful soul, consider these three pillars of predestination and let your heart lean upon them with a firm faith. Consider the benefits of divine mercy from the past and do not doubt that it will be preserved until the end. When you did not yet exist, God created you. When you were damned on account of Adam's fall, he redeemed you. When you were outside the Church and living in the world, he called you. When you were ignorant, he instructed<sup>179</sup> you. When you strayed, he led you back. When you stood, he supported you. When you fell, he lifted you up. When you went on ahead, he led you. When you came to him, he took you in. In this, he acted in patient expectation and in the facilitation of pardoning. The mercy of God goes before you. Hope steadfastly that it will also follow you (Psalm 23:6). The mercy of God goes before you so that you will be healed. It will follow you so that you will be glorified. It goes before you so that you may live piously. It will follow you so that you will live with him eternally. Why aren't you contrite when you fall? What hand supports

---

<sup>172</sup> *Illud om. BCDG.*

<sup>173</sup> *Universal, like the Church.*

<sup>174</sup> *Est om. CDG.*

<sup>175</sup> *Ejus add. BCDG. Suum add. G.*

<sup>176</sup> *Ejus om. CDG.*

<sup>177</sup> *Or guaranteed.*

<sup>178</sup> *i.e. denies the faith.*

<sup>179</sup> *Instruit A.*



you? Whose except God's? Therefore trust also in the mercy of God for the future and hope more steadfastly for the goal of faith: eternal salvation (1 Peter 1:9). Indeed in whose hands would you rather the entire matter of your salvation rest than in those which made heaven and earth (Isaiah 66:2), in those which are never shortened (Isaiah 59:1), in those whose heart pours forth mercy and never runs out of veins through which to flow?

Consider, devout soul, that we are chosen by God in order that we may be holy and blameless (Ephesians 1:4). The benefits of election do not therefore pertain to those who do not seek after a holy life. We are elected in Christ (Ephesians 1:4). We are in Christ through faith and faith reveals itself through love (Galatians 5:6). Thus, where there is no love, there is no faith. Where there is no faith, Christ is not present. Wherever Christ is not present, there is no election. To be sure the solid foundation of God stands firm, having this mark, "The Lord knows those who are his" (2 Timothy 2:19). Yet, nevertheless, "Everyone who invokes the name of the Lord must turn away from unrighteousness" (2 Timothy 2:19). No one can snatch Christ's sheep from his hand, but rather Christ's sheep listen to his voice (John 10:27, 28). We are the house of God, but we must hold firmly to the confidence and glory of the hope until the end (Hebrews 3:6). O Lord, who has worked it in me to will, work it also in me to finish (Philippians 2:13).

## **XXV. Concerning the salutary efficacy of prayer.**

### **The sighs penetrate the heavens.**

This is the greatest benefit of God: that he insists that the pious pray as if in a conversation with an intimate friend. He himself gives us the desire for prayer. He himself also gives the result of prayer. The power of prayer is great, which, issued on earth, nonetheless operates in heaven. The prayer of a righteous man is the key to heaven; the petition ascends to heaven and the acquittal of God descends. Prayer is a shield for protection by which all the arrows of the adversary are repelled (Ephesians 6:16). When Moses stretched out his hands the Israelites prevailed against the Amalekites (Exodus 17:17). If you extend your hands to heaven, Satan will not prevail against you. Just as a wall stands against an enemy, so also the wrath of God is turned aside by the prayers of the righteous.

Our own very Savior used to pray, not because he had to, but in order that the value of prayer would be commended to us. Prayer is an appraisal of our subjection because God instructs us to pray so that we might offer our prayers as a sort of daily spiritual tribute to him. It is our ladder for ascending, for prayer is nothing other than a kind of pilgrimage of the mind to God. Prayer is our shield of defense for the soul of the man living in prayer is shielded from the insults of demons. It is the faithful messenger of ambassadorship for prayer ascends to the throne of God and summons him to produce aid. This messenger is never frustrated in attaining his goal for God indeed always hears us, if not according to our will, nevertheless according to our advantage and salvation. One of two things we are able to hope for without doubting is that he will either grant that for which we petition him or that he knows something better. God gave his Son, that most excellent gift, without our asking. What will he do when we ask! We can doubt neither that the Father listens nor that the Son intercedes. For whatever reason, enter with Moses into the tabernacle to consult with the Lord through prayer and you will speedily hear a divine response. Christ was transfigured when he was praying (Luke 9:29). So also, a great transformation of the soul occurs when we pray, for prayer is the light of the soul that oftentimes leaves the very soul that it found despairing now rejoicing.

How will you gaze upon the face of the Sun unless you have first adored him who has sent that most sweet light for your eyes? How will you delight in peace of mind unless you first have adored him who has so abundantly furnished and bestowed such good things? With what hope may you hand yourself over to the nighttime unless you have first fortified yourself by praying. What fruit can you hope to reap from your labors unless you first adore him without whom all labor is useless?

If you then seek after spiritual or corporal gifts, ask and you will receive (Matthew 7:7). If you seek after Christ, seek him through prayers and you will find him. If you are afflicted with temptation and a lack of spiritual blessings in the desert of this world, approach the spiritual rock (1 Corinthians 10:4), which is Christ,

through devotion. Strike it with the staff of prayer and you will experience that rivers of divine grace will gush forth to quench your thirst. Do you want to offer an acceptable sacrifice to God? Offer prayers. God will sense the sweet aroma and his anger will cease (Genesis 8:21). Do you want to occupy yourself unceasingly with God? Love prayers, spiritual conversations between God and the devout soul.<sup>180</sup> Do you want to taste that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:9). Invite the Lord by prayer into the dwelling of your heart.<sup>181</sup>

Prayer pleases God, but it must be offered in the appropriate way. Therefore, whoever desires to be heard should pray wisely, ardently, humbly, faithfully, steadfastly,<sup>182</sup> and confidently. Pray wisely, that is pray for that which serves divine glory and the salvation of neighbors. God is omnipotent. Therefore, do not set restrictions on Him by the way you pray. God is omniscient. Therefore, do not prescribe an order for responses. Do not issue prayers without due respect,<sup>183</sup> but let them flow from the faith that precedes prayer—the faith that respects the Word. Whatever God has thus absolutely promised in the Word, you may pray for absolutely. Whatever he has promised conditionally, such as temporal things, you may in like manner pray for conditionally. What he has in no way promised, that also you should in no way pray for. Oftentimes God gives us in his anger what he denies us in his mercy. Therefore, follow Christ who resigned himself completely to God's will (Matthew 26:39,44).

Pray ardently. How indeed can you request that God hear you when you cannot hear yourself? Do you want God to call you to mind when you do not call yourself to mind? When you want to pray enter the closet and close the door (Matthew 6:6). The closet is your heart. You ought to enter into that if you want to pray in the right way. You must close its door, lest thoughts concerning the affairs of the world are able to disturb you. No voices come to the ear of God except the movements of the soul. The mind ought to be incited by the ardor of our thoughts so that it will greatly surpass what our tongue may express, for this is also to worship in<sup>184</sup> spirit and truth, as the Lord requires (John 4:23). Christ used to pray on the mountain (Luke 6:12) and lift His eyes to heaven (John 17:1). So also, we ought to turn our mind away from every creature and to God. You do injury to God if you pray to him in order that he might regard you when you really have no regard for yourself. We are able to pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17) if we pray in spirit, so that our mind is vigilant with holy desires toward God. There is no need to always cry out loudly, for prayer also includes our thoughts. At times one sigh, stimulated by the Holy Spirit and offered to God in the spirit, is more pleasing to God than a long and drawn out repetition of prayers where the tongue speaks but the heart is completely silent.

Pray<sup>185</sup> humbly so that you trust<sup>186</sup> not in your<sup>187</sup> own merits, but all the more in the grace of God. If our prayers lean upon our<sup>188</sup> worthiness, they are damned, even though the heart may sweat blood in devotion. No one pleases God except Christ. Therefore neither may one pray correctly except through Christ and on account of Christ. Sacrifices that are not offered on the altar of the tabernacle alone are not acceptable (Deuteronomy 12:5). Prayer that is not offered solely on that one altar, that is, on Christ, does not please God. The prayers of the Israelites were promised<sup>189</sup> to be heard if they faced towards Jerusalem when they prayed (1 Kings 8:44). So also, let us turn to Christ, the temple of the divine (John 2:19,21), in our prayers. When Christ prayed in the passion, he cast himself down on the ground (Mark 14:35). See how that most holy soul humbled himself in the presence of the divine majesty.

---

<sup>180</sup> The Latin text I am using has a question mark here, but I believe it is an error, breaking with the pattern of the preceding verses and the sense of the passage, and so I have omitted it.

<sup>181</sup> Obviously, this is the prayer of a believer, beseeching the increased and continued presence of the Lord, and not a synergistic prayer reminiscent of decision theology, although it still makes this WELSer a little uncomfortable.

<sup>182</sup> Perseveranter *om. AB.*

<sup>183</sup> Preces *om. CDG.*

<sup>184</sup> In *om. CDG.*

<sup>185</sup> Ores *G.* I followed this reading, rather than the 3<sup>rd</sup> singular the text had.

<sup>186</sup> Confidas *G.* see above.

<sup>187</sup> Tuo *G.* see above.

<sup>188</sup> Nostrae *DG.*

<sup>189</sup> Est *add. C.* I followed this reading.

Let the Christian pray faithfully so that he may offer himself to the lack of every joy and to patience in every punishment. The sooner one prays the better. The more frequently one prays the better. The more fervently one prays, the more acceptable to God. Let the Christian pray with perseverance, for when God takes time in giving a reply, he is commending gifts, not denying them. Those gifts that have been desired longer are sweeter when obtained. Let the Christian pray boldly so that he petitions naturally in faith, never hesitating. O most merciful God, who has commanded us to pray, grant that we may also pray correctly.

## **XXVI. Concerning the protection of the holy angels.**

### **A holy angel is with the saints.**

Meditate, devout soul, how great divine grace is that the protection of angels has been arranged for you. The Heavenly Father sent his Son for our freedom. The Son of God became incarnate<sup>190</sup> for our salvation. The Holy Spirit<sup>191</sup> was sent for our sanctification. Angels are sent for our protection. Thus the whole curia of heaven, so to speak, attends to us and hands over its benefits to us. I no longer marvel that all the inferior creatures have been formed for man, since the angels themselves, who are by far more valuable than creatures, do not deny their service to us. What wonder is it that the heavens serve us with light in the day as we labor and darkness in<sup>192</sup> the night as we sleep, when the inhabitants of the kingdom of heaven itself serve us? What wonder is it that the air yields us life-breath and all kinds of birds for service, when the heavenly spirits watch over us for our protection? What wonder is it that the water gives drink, washes filth, irrigates the arid land, and abounds with various kinds of fish, when the angels themselves are present with us to restore us when we are exhausted from the heat of calamity and temptation? What wonder is it that the earth sustains us, nourishing us with bread and wine, and fills our table with all sorts of fruits and animals, when angels have been commanded to guard us in all our ways, to bear you in their hands, lest you dash your foot against a stone (Psalm 91:11)?

The angels were concerned with Christ for an angel announced his conception (Luke 1:31), an angel revealed his birth (Luke 2:9-11), an angel commanded them to flee into Egypt (Matthew 2:13), angels ministered to him in the desert (Matthew 4:11), angels ministered to him in his entire preaching ministry, an angel was present with him in the agony of death (Luke 22:43), an angel appeared at his resurrection (Matthew 28:2,5), angels were present at the ascension (Acts 1:10), and angels will come with him at his return for Judgment (Matthew 25:31).

Therefore as angels ministered to Christ in the days of his flesh, so also they are concerned with ministering to those who have been incorporated into Christ through faith. As they ministered to the Head, so also they minister to the members. They are glad to serve those on the earth whom they will one day have as companions in heaven. They do not refuse service to those whose sweetest company they hope for one day.

As Jacob went on his way to the fatherland a camp of angels appeared to him (Genesis 32:1); so also, the angelic guards attend to the pious in this life, which is the way to the heavenly fatherland. Angels appeared to protect Daniel in the midst of the lions (Daniel 6:22); so also, they are prepared to protect all the pious from all the traps of the infernal lion. Angels rescued Lot from the incineration of Sodom; so also, they oftentimes rescue us from the fires of hell by holy inspirations and by protections against the temptations of the devil. Angels carried Lazarus into the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:22); so also, they will carry the souls of all the elect to the palace of the heavenly King. An angel led Peter out of prison (Acts 12:7); so also, they oftentimes rescue the pious from the presence of danger. The power of our adversary the devil is certainly great, but the guardianship of angels delivers us. Do not doubt that these helpers are present with you in every trouble, for Scripture, under the figure of Cherubim and Seraphim, depicts them with wings, so they are certainly able to quickly bring aid and be near us in whatever need we may be. Do not doubt that they are with you in every

---

<sup>190</sup> Incarnates *ACD*. Incarnatus est *G*.

<sup>191</sup> Sanctus *om*. *G*.

<sup>192</sup> In *om*. *CDG*.

place for your protection, for they are the finest spirits, which no body hinders. All visible things yield to them and, likewise, all bodies, however firm or dense, as their spirits are passable. Do not doubt that they know your troubles and afflictions, for they always see the face of the heavenly Father (Matthew 18:10), and are always prepared for most prompt service.

Consider also, devout soul, that these angels are holy. Be zealous for holiness, then, if you want to have them as companions. Similarity of character wins over friendship. Become accustomed to holy actions if you desire the protection of angels. In every place and corner show reverence toward your angel and do not do anything in its presence that you would be ashamed to do in the sight of men. These spirits are chaste, so they are driven away by base actions. As bees are repelled by smoke and doves by an offensive smell, so also the angels guarding our life flee lamentable and grievous sin.

Having lost these defenses through sin, how will you fare alone against the assaults of various dangers? If your soul lacks the wall of angelic defense, the devil will easily overcome it with his crooked persuasions. These holy angels are sent from God as ministering spirits (Hebrews 1:14). Therefore, you must first be reconciled to God through faith if you want to have the protection of angels. Where the grace of God is not present, there also the protection of angels is absent. Let us view angels as the helping hands of God, so to speak, which never rouse themselves to work unless God himself directs them. "There is joy among the angels in heaven over one sinner who repents" (Luke 15:10). The tears of the penitent are like the wine of the angels. The impenitent heart, however, flees guardian angels. Let us bring forth repentance, therefore, so that we may excite the joy of angels. Angels are heavenly and spiritual in nature. Let us contemplate heavenly and spiritual things, therefore, so that they may be pleased to abide with us. Angels are humble and arrogance is deeply disdainful to them who<sup>193</sup> are not ashamed to minister to tender little children as well (Matthew 18:10). Why then is earth and ashes proud (Sirach 10:9), since heavenly spirits humble themselves to such a degree?

In death, the craftiness of the devil is to be feared the most, for it is written that the serpent will bruise the heel (Genesis 3:15). The furthest part of the body is the heel; the last part of your life is death.<sup>194</sup> In that final agony of death, the protection of the angels who free us from the flaming darts of the devil and carry the soul departing from its bodily home to heavenly paradise, is most necessary. When Zechariah was performing his service in the holy temple, the angel of the Lord came to him (Luke 1:11); so also, if you rejoice in the Word and in the exercise of prayer, you too will be able to rejoice in the patronage of the angels.

O most merciful God, who has led us through the wilderness of this life by the holy angels, grant that by them we may be led into the heavenly kingdom.

## **XXVII. The snares of the devil.**

### **Who knows the craftiness of the devil?**

Meditate, devote soul, on how much danger you constantly face, since your adversary the devil always threatens you. That enemy is most prepared and audacious, most robust in strength, most crafty in arts, most abounding with devices, indefatigable in his zeal for battle, variable in every form. He himself seduces us into all sorts of sin and afterwards accuses us before God's tribunal. He accuses, in turn, God among men, men among God, and men among men. First, he diligently scopes out the propensities of each individual and then puts forward the appropriate temptation. Just as attackers take up a siege, not of the strongest and best-defended parts, but where they estimate the walls to be weakest, the ditches shallowest, and the towers least protected, so also the devil, perpetually besieging the souls of men, first rises up where he senses flexibility and emotion in the soul.

<sup>193</sup> Qui *BCDG*. I followed this reading, rather than the *quia* in the text I am using.

<sup>194</sup> Calcaneus est, extremus vitae tuae terminus est mors *G*. I followed this reading. My text omitted death, which the sense obviously includes.

Having been soundly defeated once already, he does not give up but rather throws himself all the more into tempting in order that he may conquer those in weariness and negligence whom he was not earlier able to conquer by the violence of temptations. From what man will that one who has dared approach the Lord of Glory himself with his craftiness hold back his deceptions (Matthew 4:3)? What Christian will he who sought to sift the very apostles of Christ themselves as wheat abstain from deceiving (Luke 22:31). Satan deceived Adam when he was yet in his original nature [*posse non peccare*] (Genesis 3:2-5). Who then will he not be able to deceive in the nature [*non posse non peccare*], which replaced the original [*posse non peccare*]? He deceived Judas in the Savior's school. Who will he not be able to deceive in the world, the school of error?

In every area of life, there are snares of the devil to be feared. In prosperity, he invites us to elation of the soul. In adversity, he invites us to despair. If he observes that someone takes delight in frugality, he is glad to bind that person with the bonds of inexplicable desires. If anyone is animated with a heroic spirit, he inflames that person with the goads of passion. If he observes that someone is a little too joyous, he incites fervor for foolish pleasures in him. If he notices anyone is zealous for religion, he attempts to entangle that person in vain superstition. If he recognizes that someone is concerned with honors, he ruins that one with criminal ambitions.

When he would incite us to sin, he amplifies the mercy of God. When he has cast us headlong into sin, he amplifies the justice of God. First, he wants to lead us to presumption, and then he attempts to lead us to despair. Sometimes he besieges us with external persecutions; other times he besieges us with the internal fires of temptation. Sometimes he assails us openly and violently; other times secretly and deceptively. He proposes gluttony in eating, dissipation in reproducing, laziness in work, ill will in conversation, anger in correction, avarice in management, arrogance in honor. He proposes evil thoughts in the heart, false accusations in the mouth, sinful operations in the members of the body. In our waking hours, he moves us to perverse works, in sleeping to shameful dreams. Therefore, we must beware of the snares of the devil everywhere and in everything. When we sleep, he watches. We feel secure and, nevertheless, he goes around like a lion (1 Peter 5:8). If you were to see an angry lion poised to make an attack, oh, how you would truly shudder with fear! And when you heard that the infernal lion was lying in wait for you, would you still in the same way sleep in such security?

Consider therefore, faithful soul, the snares of this most powerful enemy and seek to equal him with spiritual armor. "Gird your loins with truth and put on the breastplate of righteousness" (Ephesians 6:14). Put on the perfect righteousness of Christ and you will be safe from the temptations of the devil. Hide yourself in the cleft of the wounds of Christ (Song of Solomon 2:14) as often as you are vexed by the darts of this malignant serpent. The one who truly believes is in Christ. Therefore, as Satan has no jurisdiction in Christ, so also he has no jurisdiction in one who truly believes, "having put on the shoes of preparation from the Gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:15). Let our confession of Christ constantly resound so that it is heard from our mouth. In this way, no temptation of the devil will be able to harm us. A charmer's words do not as quickly drive a corporeal snake away, as the words of a continuing confession of Christ chase away this spiritual snake.

"Take up the shield of faith" (Ephesians 6:16) so that we may extinguish the fiery darts of the wickedest enemy. It is indeed faith that removes mountains (Matthew 17:20)—mountains, you understand, of doubt, of persecution, and of temptation. The Israelites whose doorposts had been marked with the blood of the paschal lamb were not struck down by the angel of death (Exodus 12:13); so also those whose hearts have been sprinkled with the blood of Christ through faith will not be harmed by the destroyer. Faith reclines upon the promises of God. Satan cannot overcome these promises. Therefore, he is also not able to prevail against faith. Faith is the light of the soul. The temptations of the evil spirit are therefore easily observed in this light. Through faith, our sins are cast into the depths of the sea of divine mercy (Micah 7:19). In that sea, the flaming darts of the devil are easily extinguished.

We ought also to take up "the helmet of salvation" (Ephesians 6:17), that is, a holy hope. Endure temptation, considering its end. God is indeed the guide of our struggles and the crown of the victor. If there were no enemy, there would be no battle. If there were no battle, there would be no victory. If there were no victory, there would be no crown. That battle which brings God nearer is better than that peace which alienates us from God.

“Take up also the sword of the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:17), which is the Word of God. Allow the consolations of Scripture to prevail upon you more than the contradictions of the devil. Christ overcame all the temptations of Satan with the Word (Matthew 4:4). With the Word, Christians also still overcome all the temptations of Satan.

And finally, you have the greatest aid against temptation in prayers. Whenever the little boat of the soul is being overwhelmed by the waves of temptation, awake Christ with prayer (Matthew 8:24-25).<sup>195</sup> Our visible enemies we overcome with blows; our invisible enemy we overcome by pouring forth prayers.

Battle for us in us, O Christ, so that we also may conquer in you.

## **XXVIII. General rules for living a pious life.**

### **Piety is the highest wisdom.**

Every day you draw nearer to death, judgment, and eternity. Consider therefore every day how you will stand in death and in the severe case of judgment, and how you will live in eternity. We must have a careful concern for every thought, action, and word, because we must at once render a careful accounting for every thought, word, and action (Matthew 12:36). Consider in the evening that death may press upon you this night. Consider in the morning that death may come upon you this day. Do not defer conversion and good works until tomorrow, because tomorrow is uncertain, but the impending death is always certain. Nothing is more opposed to piety than postponement (Sirach 18:22). If you will despise the inner call of the Spirit, you will never arrive at true conversion. Do not postpone conversion and good works until old age, but offer God that blooming time of your youth. Old age is uncertain for the young, but the destruction prepared for the impenitent youth is certain. There is no age that is better for God’s service than one’s youth, when the body is strong and the soul is flourishing.

You ought not earn any man’s favor by wicked actions. Indeed, it is not that man but God who will someday judge your life. Thus, never determine that the favor of men is preferable to the grace of God. We are either going forward or backward in the way of the Lord. Therefore, every day examine the days of your life to see if you are progressing or regressing in piety. To stand still in the way of the Lord is to regress. Take pleasure then if you are not standing still in the course of piety, and always strive to walk in the way of the Lord. In your conversation, be gentle with everyone, violent with no one, familiar with few. Live piously in relation to God, soberly in relation to yourself, righteously in relation to your neighbor (Titus 2:12). Deal favorably with your friends, patiently with your enemies, and benevolently with all in whatever ways you are able, working for their benefit. In life, die daily to yourself and to your sins so that in death you will be able to live to God.

Let mercy be apparent in your emotions, kindness in your face, humility in your habits, modesty in your cohabitation, patience in your trials. Always consider the past in three ways: the evil committed, the good omitted, the time lost. Always consider the present in three ways: the brevity of the present life, the difficulty of salvation, the scarcity of those who are saved. Always consider the future in three ways: death, which nothing is more horrible than, judgment, which nothing is more terrible than, infernal punishment, which nothing is more intolerable than. Let evening prayers amend the sins of the day gone by. Let the last day of the week amend the transgressions of the preceding days. In the evening, consider how many fell headlong into hell that day and give thanks to God that he has permitted you time for repenting. There are three things above you that you must never erase from your memory: the eye seeing everything, the ear hearing everything, and the book in which everything is written. God has communicated his entire self to you; communicate also your entire self to your neighbor. That life given entirely to the service of others is best. Exhibit obedience and reverence to superiors, counsel and help to equals, and protection and correction to inferiors. Subject your<sup>196</sup> body to the soul and the soul to God. Weep over the evil deeds of your past. Ponder the provision of good deeds in the present. Long

<sup>195</sup> My Latin text cites Matthew 8:28, which must be an error, since the reference is to the Christ’s stilling of the sea.

<sup>196</sup> Tamen *CDG*.

with the desire of your whole heart for good deeds in the future. Remember your sins so that you may sorrow. Remember death so that you may cease sinning. Remember divine justice so that you may fear sinning. Remember divine mercy lest you despair on account of sin.

Withdraw from the world as much as you are able and devote yourself to the service of the Lord. Always consider that your chastity is jeopardized by pleasure, humility by riches, piety by business affairs. Desire to please no one but Christ. Fear to displease no one but Christ. Always pray to God that he may ask of you what he wills and give to you what he asks. That which has been done, may he conceal; that which is in the future, may he rule. Wish to appear as you ought to be. God certainly does not judge according to appearance but according to truth. Beware of speaking much and with many words, for he will demand an accounting for every idle word in the Judgment (Matthew 12:36).<sup>197</sup> Your works, of whatever nature may be, will not pass away, but are scattered as seeds for eternity. “If you sow in the flesh, you reap corruption from the flesh. If you sow in the Spirit, you will reap an eternal reward from the Spirit” (Galatians 6:8). Neither the honors of the world nor the riches accumulated here will follow you after death. Neither the pleasures nor the vanities of the world will follow you after the end appointed for your life. Rather all your works will follow you (Revelation 14:13). Therefore as you wish to be in the Judgment, appear today in the sight of God. Do not esteem highly that which is present with you now, but esteem more that which is lacking. Do not become more arrogant on account of that which has been given, but rather become more humble on account of that which has been denied. Learn to live while you are yet permitted to live. In this period of time, eternal life is either lost or acquired. After death, no time remains for working, but the time for compensation begins. In the future life work is not expected, but rather the retribution for work. Let holy meditation produce knowledge in you; knowledge, remorse; remorse, devotion; devotion, prayer.

Silence of the mind is of great benefit for the peace of the heart. However much you are separated from the world, that much more you will be acceptable to God. Whatever you desire to have, beg from God. Whatever you have, attribute to God. Whoever does not give thanks for that which has already been given is not worthy of being given more. The downward stream of grace ceases where a returning stream does not exist. Whatever happens to you, convert to good. As often as prosperity meets you, esteem it as cause to show forth blessing and praise. As often as adversities meet you, esteem them as admonishments to repentance and conversion. Display the force of your power in helping, your wisdom in teaching, your riches in philanthropy. Do not let adversity tear you down or prosperity lift you up. Let Christ, whom you follow in the way, be the focus of your life so that you will follow him into in the fatherland. In all things let the greatest concern be for you deep humility and burning love. Lift up your heart in love to God so that you cling to him. Let humility weigh down your heart lest you become arrogant. Esteem God as a Father in mercy, as the Lord in discipline—as a Father in his tenderness with his power, and as the Lord in his severity with it. Love him piously as a Father; fear him necessarily as the Lord. Love him because he desires mercy; fear him because he does not desire sin. Fear the Lord and hope in him (Psalm 37:5). Know your misery and praise His grace.

O God, who has worked in me to will, work in me also to do (Philippians 2:13).

## **XXIX. Concerning misplaced security.**

### **To live securely is death.**

Consider, devout soul, how difficult it is to be saved, and you will easily shake off all security. Security is found never and nowhere: neither in heaven, nor in paradise, much less in the world. An angel fell before the presence of God; Adam fell in the place of pleasure. Adam was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27), yet the snares of the devil nonetheless deceived him. Solomon was wiser than all men (1 Kings 3:12), yet he was nonetheless led away from God by women (1 Kings 11:3). Judas was in the school of the Savior and listened every day to the salutary words of this greatest Doctor, yet he was nevertheless, not safe from the traps of the

---

<sup>197</sup> Exiget G.

seducer (Luke 22:3). He was cast headlong into the bottomless pit of avarice and from avarice into the bottomless pit of eternal sadness. David was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14) and the dearest son of Jehovah, but through murder and adultery, he was made a son of death (2 Sam 12:5). Where then is there security in this life. Cling to the promises of God with a firm confidence of heart and you will be safe from the assaults of demons. No one is secure in this life except with that security furnished by the infallible promises to the one who believes and walks in the way of the Lord. If we come to blessedness in the future, then we will finally have complete security. In this life, fear and religion are connected: nor ought there be one without the other. Do not be secure in adversity, but whatever adversity happens consider it to be a scourge for your sins. God oftentimes punishes us for our hidden sins with a visible whip. Consider the serious stain of your sins and fear the righteous avenger of sins,<sup>198</sup> lest you be secure in prosperity, for God is indeed angry with the one whom is not reprov'd in this life.

What are the afflictions of the pious? They are bitter arrows sent from the sweet hand of God. God esteems those unworthy of chastisement in this world that he nevertheless will reject in eternity. Oftentimes the happiness of human success is evidence of eternal damnation to come. Nothing is unhappier than sinful happiness; nothing is more miserable than one who is ignorant of his misery. Wherever you turn your eyes, there you find a reason for sorrow and gaze upon the remedy for security. Lift up your thoughts to God, whom we have offended. Look down to hell that we have earned, back to the sins that we have committed, forward to the judgment that we fear, inward to the conscience that we have soiled, outward to the world that we have loved. See where you have come from and be ashamed, where you are and sigh, where you are heading and tremble. Narrow is the gate of salvation, but still narrower is the way (Matthew 7:14).

God gives you the treasure of faith, but you carry this treasure in a jar of clay (2 Corinthians 4:7). God gives you angels for protection (Psalm, 91:11), but the devil is not far away in order to seduce you. God has renewed you in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23), but you still have much of the old flesh. You have been established in the grace of God, but you have not yet been established in eternal glory. He has prepared a mansion for you in heaven, but he chastises you nevertheless with the challenges of the world. God promises forgiveness for the penitent, but he has not promised to give a penitent will to the delinquent. The consolations of eternal life await you, but it is nevertheless necessary for you to enter it through many tribulations (Acts 14:22). The crown of an eternal reward has been promised, but first a serious battle remains to be overcome. God does not change his promises, but neither ought you to change your zeal for eternal life. If the servant is not doing what is commanded, God does what is threatened. One therefore ought to continually be ashamed and mourn, putting aside security, lest we may by the righteous and secret judgment of God be deserted and relinquished into the power of the devil for destruction.

Thus as long divine grace is present, delight in it, although you must never yet presume that you possess this gift of God for yourself as an inherited right, so that you actually become secure concerning it, as if you were never able to lose it, lest if God were by chance to suddenly take the gift away and retract his hand, you would be disheartened and sorrow more than you ought. You are indeed in every way blessed, if you take diligent<sup>199</sup> care to avoid indifference to the appearance of every evil. God will not desert you, but beware that God is not deserted by you. God has given grace. Pray that he may also give perseverance. God grants that we may be certain about salvation, yet he does not grant that you may be secure. You must fight bravely so that you may also triumph sweetly (2 Timothy 4:7).

Your flesh within you battles against you—a nearer and thus more formidable enemy. The world around you battles against you—a more plentiful and thus more formidable enemy. The devil above you battles against you—a more powerful and thus a more formidable enemy. In the power of God, do not fear to meet these enemies. In the power of God, you will be able to obtain the victory. However, you will never conquer such enemies in security, but with unceasing battling. The time of life is the time of battle. You will fight the greatest battle at that time when you do not know you are under attack. They are collecting their most powerful forces at

---

<sup>198</sup> Peccatum A.

<sup>199</sup> Satagis G.



that time when they appear to submit to some sort of truce. They are vigilant and you sleep? They prepare themselves at night and you do not prepare any resistance for yourselves?

Many fail in the way before reaching the place prepared for them in the fatherland. How many Israelites perished in the desert, none of which attained the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 1:35)! How many spiritual sons of Abraham have perished in the desert of this life before arriving in the promised inheritance of the heavenly kingdom! Nothing should cause us to cast off security more quickly than thinking about the scarcity of those who persevere. Let there be so great a desire for heavenly glory within us and a love reaching for it, so great a sorrow that we have not yet attained it, so great a fear that we may not<sup>200</sup> attain it, that we feel no joy apart from those things which present either help or hope of attaining heavenly glory. What good does it do to rejoice in the moment if you will be forced to grieve in eternity? What joy can there be in this life if that which delights us is transient while that which torments is not?

We live in security as if we had already passed by the hour of death and judgment. Christ said that the Judgment would come at an hour we do not expect (Matthew 24:44). The truth speaks this and repeats it over and over. Hear and fear. If the Lord will come in an hour we do not expect, we ought to fear immensely lest we come to judgment unprepared. If we come unprepared, how will we be able to withstand the harsh dialogue at this judgment? In all eternity, we will not be able to regain even the littlest thing that is lost in that one moment. In one brief moment, the quality of all eternity will be determined for us. In this one moment the sentence of life or death, damnation or salvation, eternal punishment or glory will be declared for all.

O Lord, who has placed me in good grace, place me additionally in good perseverance.

### **XXX. Concerning the imitation of the holy life of Christ.**

#### **Let Christ be the rule of your life.**

The holy life of Christ is the most perfect archetype of virtue; every action of Christ is for our instruction. Many want to pursue Christ but they refuse to follow him. They want to use Christ but they do not want to imitate him. "Learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart," says the Savior (Matthew 11:29). Unless you want to be a disciple of Christ, you will never be a real Christian. Not only is the passion of Christ your merit but the actions of Christ are also your example. "Your beloved is white and ruddy" (Song of Solomon 5:10); so also may you be ruddy with the sprinkling of the blood of Christ and the imitation of the life of your Beloved, Christ.

How can you truly<sup>201</sup> love Christ if you do not love his holy life? "If you love me," says the Savior, "keep my commandments" (John 14:15). Therefore, whoever does not keep his commands, that one also does not love him. The holy life of Christ is the perfect rule for our life. The one rule of the life of Christ is to be preferred to the rules of Francis or<sup>202</sup> Benedict. If you want to be an adopted son of God, see how this only-begotten Son lived. If you want to be an heir along with Christ, you ought also to be an imitator of Christ. Whoever wants to live in vice, that one has given himself to the service of the devil. How will he who really<sup>203</sup> wants to be with the devil also be able to be with Christ? To love corruption is to love the devil, for all sins are from the devil (1 John 3:8). How then will he who is a lover of the devil also be able to be a lover of Christ? To love God is to love the holy life, for every holy life is from God. How then will he who is not a lover of the holy life be able to be a lover of God? The test of love is the works exhibited. It is a real attribute of love to follow the one loved and likewise to be of one will and one sentiment with the one loved. If therefore you truly love Christ, you will give obedience to His commands. You will love the holy life with him and you will consider heavenly things, having been renewed in the spirit of your mind (Ephesians 4:23). Eternal life is in the

---

<sup>200</sup> Ne non *corrigendum videtur*.

<sup>201</sup> Vero *BCDG*.

<sup>202</sup> Et *DG*.

<sup>203</sup> Vere *G*.

contemplation of Christ (John 17:3). Whoever does not really love Christ, that one also does not really know him. Whoever does not love humility, chastity, meekness, temperance, and charity also does not love Christ, for the life of Christ was nothing other than humility, chastity, meekness, temperance, and charity.

Christ says, “He himself does not know those who do not fulfill the will of the Father” (Matthew 7:21,23). Therefore, those who do not do the will of the Father also do not know Christ. What is truly the will of the Father? “Our sanctification,” says the apostle (1 Thessalonians 4:3). “He who does not have the Spirit of Christ is not of Christ” (Romans 8:9). Where the Holy Spirit is not really present, there also his gifts and fruits are also absent. What are really the fruits of the Spirit? “Love, joy, peace, tenderness, kindness, goodness, faith, gentleness, temperance” (Galatians 5:22). Just as the Holy Spirit rested upon Christ, so also he rests upon all those who are in Christ (Isaiah 11:2) through true faith, for the bride of Christ delights in the fragrance of the ointments of Christ (Song of Solomon 1:3).

“Whoever is joined with the Lord, is one with him” (1 Corinthians 6:17). Just as a man and woman joined in marriage are made one flesh from two (Matthew 19:6), so also in the spiritual union of Christ and the soul they are made one spirit from two. Where there is truly one spirit, there is truly the same will. Where there is the same will, there also are the same actions. Whoever then does not conform his life to Christ’s is proven to be neither joined to the Lord nor to have the Spirit of Christ. Is it not right that all our life be rendered in conformity to him who conformed all of himself to us in love? “God, by manifesting Himself in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16), has put forward an example of a holy life for us, lest someone should take refuge in the flesh, making excuses on account of it for failing in the holy life. No life is happier and more tranquil than Christ’s, for Christ is true God. What can be happier and more tranquil than the true God, the highest Good? The life of this age brings brief gladness but drags eternal sadness along with it.

To whom you conform in this life, to him you will conform in the resurrection. If you begin to conform to Christ in this life, you will conform to him also more fully in the resurrection. If you conform to the devil now through shameful actions, you will be conformed to him through torment later. “Whoever wants to follow me must deny himself,” says the Savior, “and daily take up his cross” (Matthew 16:24). If you deny yourself in this life, Christ will acknowledge you before him in the Judgment. If on account of Christ you renounce your own honor, love, and will in this life, Christ will make you share in his honor, love, and will in the future life. If you are a participant in the cross in this life, you will be a participant in the future eternal light. If you are a participant in tribulation in this life, you will be a participant in consolation in the future. If you are a participant in persecution in this life, you will be a participant in the most generous reward in the future. “Whoever confesses me in this age,” says Christ, “I will also confess him in the presence of the Father in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). Now we must actually confess Christ, not only with a profession of doctrine, but also with conformity of life. Thus, he will finally acknowledge us before him in the Judgment. “Whoever denies me in the presence of men, I will deny him also in the presence of the Heavenly Father” (Matthew 10:33). Christ is denied not only with words but even more indeed by an impious life. Whoever then denies Christ by his deeds in this life; Christ will also deny him in the Judgment.

He who does not have true faith in Christ is not a Christian. A true faith in Christ engrafts us as branches to the spiritual vine (John 15:4). The heavenly father takes away all the branches in Christ that are not bearing fruit. “Whoever truly remains in Christ and dwells in Christ through faith” (Ephesians 3:17) bears much fruit. He who does not draw sap from the vine is not a branch in the vine. A soul that does not draw the spiritual sap of charity from Christ through faith is not in Christ through faith.

Conform our lives to you in this age, good Jesus, so that we may be more fully conformed to you in the future.

### **XXXI. Concerning self-denial.**

**The one who does not deny himself, denies Christ.**

“Whoever wants to follow me must deny himself,” says the Savior (Matthew 16:24). To deny one’s self is to renounce the love of one’s self. Self-love prohibits the love of God. If you want to be a disciple of Christ, it is necessary that the root of self-love completely die in you. No one loves Christ unless he hates himself. “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it does not bear fruit” (John 12:24). Likewise, you will not be able to receive the fruit of the Holy Spirit unless your self-love dies in your heart (1 Corinthians 15:36).

The Lord said to Abraham,<sup>204</sup> “Go out from your land and your relatives and from the house of your father to the land that I am going to show you” (Genesis 12:1). Abraham would not have been able to be so great a prophet unless he first went out from his fatherland. So also, you will not be a true disciple of Christ and a truly spiritual man before you depart from your self-love. Jacob was lame in one foot from contact with the angel while the other was healthy and unharmed (Genesis 32:25). Through these two feet, a twofold love is discerned: self-love and divine love. A man will be a participant in the divine benediction at the time when the foot of self-love becomes lame and the other foot of the love of God remains healthy and whole. It is impossible to look both to heaven and to earth at the same time; so also it is impossible for someone to love both himself inordinately and God at the same time and with the same will.

Love is the highest good of our soul. Therefore, bestow this highest good of the soul upon the highest Good, namely, God. Your love is your god, that is, whatever you love the most you set up in the place of God. Whatever you love the most you judge to be the most important thing. Yet God is really the highest being. Whoever therefore loves himself considers himself God and sets himself up in the place of God, which is in every way the greatest idolatry. What you love most you esteem as the end of all things and judge to be the ultimate fulfillment of your desires. God alone is the source and end of creatures. God is the First and the Last (Isaiah 44:6). He alone fulfilled the desire of our hearts and nothing whatsoever that has been created is able to satisfy your desires. For this reason you ought to prefer the love of God to self-love. “God is the Beginning and the End” (Revelation 1:6). In him, then, our love must begin, and in him it must end. The essence of God is outside of all creatures, just as from eternity he has in and of himself been God.

Therefore, withdraw your love from all creatures. As your love is, so also are your works. If your works proceed from a true faith in and love for God, they are pleasing to God and are great before his eyes, although they may be small in the eyes of all men. If they proceed from a self-love, they are never able to please God. Self-love contaminates the most excellent of works, whatever they may be. When Christ was in the house of Simon, a certain woman opened a jar of most precious ointment and anointed the head of Christ (Matthew 26:6). The work appeared small, but it was nonetheless pleasing to Christ because it proceeded from true faith, pure charity, and serious contrition. Sacrifice was a God-pleasing work in the Old Testament. Nevertheless, in that time the sacrifice which Saul offered, set apart from their plunder of the Amalekites, did not please God (1 Samuel 15:19). Why? Because this did not proceed from a love for God. If he had really loved God, he would have not have despised the command of God concerning the destruction of all the plunder. He loved himself and his devotion. Love is a certain kind of fire, as the Church also prays: “Come, Holy Spirit, and kindle the fire of your love in the faithful.” A fire does not remain fixed to the earth but always extends above; so also, your love must not rest in yourself but must elevate itself above to the Lord.

To deny one’s self is to renounce one’s own honor. The highest Good alone is owed the highest honor. God is the highest Good. Whoever seeks his own glory is not able to seek the glory of God, just as the Savior used to say to the Pharisees: “How will you be able to believe, you who accept glory from one another” (John 5:44). Gaze upon the example of Christ and follow it. Christ oftentimes testified concerning himself that he did not seek his own glory (John 8:50), that he did not accept honor from men (John 5:41), that he is humble in heart (Matthew 11:29). Every gift you receive is from God. Therefore, use every gift in tribute to God. Every river of good works flows from the spring of divine goodness. All goodness should thus be transferred back into this sea. Plants are said to always turn themselves to the sun from which they draw life and sustenance; so also turn to God with all your gifts and all your honor. Attribute none of the ability behind your gifts to yourself. Rather, since you have nothing in and of yourself, for it is all truly from God, you should seek the honor of God

---

<sup>204</sup> Abraham CDG.

and not yourself. An example is Nebuchadnezzar when he was in the custom of saying, “Is not this great Babylon that I have built for a royal dwelling by my mighty power and for the honor of my majesty” (Daniel 4:27).<sup>205</sup> But what follows? “As the word was in the mouth of the king, a voice from heaven descended from heaven: ‘To you it is spoken,<sup>206</sup> Nebuchadnezzar: the kingdom has departed<sup>207</sup> from you. They will drive you away from men and you will make your habitation with the beasts of the field’” (Daniel 4:28,29).<sup>208</sup> So also, if your own honor and arrogance is your spiritual Babylon, that is, if you esteem your good works as your own workmanship and attribute them to your own glory and not to God alone, God will cast you away from his sight.

Finally, to deny one’s self is to renounce one’s own will. We should always obey the best will; and the will of God is always best. We should obey the will of him from whom we have everything (1 Corinthians 4:7). For everything has come to us from God. We should obey the will of him who always leads us to life and to good. “Delight in the Lord and he will give to you the petitions of your heart” (Psalm 37:4). Our own will leads us to death and to damnation (Genesis 3). Through what after all did our first parents fall from the grace of God and from the state of salvation into eternal damnation? Setting aside the will of God, they followed their own will, ignoring the command of God and listening to the persuasion of the devil. A true disciple of Christ therefore renounces his own will and desires to follow the divine will. Behold Christ in the agony of the passion; he was determined to offer his own will as a most acceptable sacrifice to God. Offer your own will as well to God and in so doing you will accomplish that which Christ requires: the denial of your self.

O Lord, may your holy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

## **XXXII. Concerning the true repose of the soul.**

### **The mind that leans upon the Lord is at rest.**

In transitory and worldly things, the soul often seeks rest but does not find it. Why? Because the soul is more valuable than any creature. Therefore, it is not able to find rest and peace in those less valuable things. All worldly things are fleeting and transitory, but the soul is immortal. How then will it find true peace in those things? All those things are earthly, yet the soul has a heavenly origin. How then will it be able to fulfill its desires in them? In Christ, the soul finds rest (Matthew 11:29). He is able to satisfy and fulfill its desires. Against the wrath of God it rests in the wounds of Christ; against the accusations of Satan in the power of Christ; against the terror of the law in the preaching of Christ; against accusing sins in the blood of Christ, which speaks better before God than the blood of Abel (Hebrews 12:24); against the terror of death it is satisfied with and trusts in the ascension of Christ to the right hand of the Father. And so our faith finds rest in Christ, but our love also finds its supreme rest there.

Whoever clings with love to earthly things does not have true rest, for earthly things do not of themselves have it, nor are they able to fully satisfy the appetite of the soul, for they are all finite; but our souls, having been made in the image of God, hunger for that infinite Good in which all good things are. As our faith ought not to rest upon anything from among all creatures, but only upon the merits of Christ, our love in the same way ought not to cling to any creature, nor, most certainly, to us ourselves. For self-love in like manner impedes the love of God. We ought to prefer the love of God to everything. Our soul is the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2). Hence, it ought to adhere to him alone. Our soul is the dwelling place of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). Hence, it ought to be the place of him alone.

Many seek rest in riches, but outside of Christ there is no rest for the soul. Where Christ is, however, there is poverty, if not in reality, then nevertheless in the emotions (Matthew 8:20). The Lord of heaven and

---

<sup>205</sup> Vs. 28 in English.

<sup>206</sup> Rex *add. G.*

<sup>207</sup> Transibit *G.*

<sup>208</sup> Verses. 29 & 30 in English.

earth used to live without a place to recline his head. In so doing, he wished to commend and consecrate poverty for us. Riches are outside of us. Yet, it is necessary for that which is internal to render rest to the soul. To whom will the soul really cling in death, when everything in the world must be relinquished? Either riches desert us or we desert them, oftentimes in life, but always in death. Where then will the soul at that time find peace and quiet?

Many seek rest in pleasures. Pleasure may indeed be able to afford a certain amount of rest and delight for the body, but not for the soul. And, after all, it is followed by its companions, pain and mourning. Pleasures pertain to this life; the soul, however, has not been created for the attractions of this life, because it is compelled to leave it through death. How, therefore, is it possible for the soul to find rest in pleasures? Outside of Christ, there is no rest for the soul. Indeed, what was the life of Christ like? It was the greatest of pain from the time of His birth until His death. In this way, the One esteeming these things for what they truly are wanted to teach us what we ought to hold pleasure to be in relation to ourselves.

Many seek rest in honors. Those who are compelled to go without rest because of the changing wind of popular opinion are truly miserable. Honor is an external and fleeting good. Yet, that which ought to bestow rest on the soul must be within us. What more can be said about human praise and glory than that for which the depiction of Apelles<sup>209</sup> has been commended? Consider the corner in which you lie hidden. How great is it in proportion to the whole province, to Europe, to the whole inhabited world! That and that alone which will one day befall the elect from God is true honor. The respite of a thing is found in its end; nor does it rest naturally, except after its end and place has been approached. The end of the created soul is God, having certainly been made in the image of God. Therefore it is not possible for there to be any rest and peace for the soul, except in its end, namely, in God. As the life of the body is the soul, so also the life of the soul is God. As the soul thus truly lives in that place in which God spiritually dwells with grace, so also the soul is dead in that in which God does not take up residence. What is really able to afford rest to a dead soul? This first death in sins necessarily brings with it the second death to damnation (Revelation 20:6).

Accordingly, whoever adheres to God firmly with his love and inwardly enjoys divine consolation, cannot have his rest disturbed by external evils. In sad things he is glad; in poverty rich; in the tribulations of this age secure; in the storms of this world tranquil; in the insults and contempt of men peaceful; in death itself alive. He pays no attention to the threats of tyrants because inside he experiences the rich consolations of the divine. He is not saddened by adversity because the Holy Spirit inwardly and effectively consoles him. He does not anguish in poverty because his riches are in the goodness of God. He is not troubled by the insults of men because he enjoys the joy of honor from the divine. He pays no attention to the will of the flesh because he has more satisfaction in the kindness of the Spirit. He does not seek worldly friendships because he knows the joys of friendship with God himself. He does not store up earthly treasures, for he has the greatest treasure stored up in heaven. He does not fear death because he always lives in God. He does not exceedingly desire worldly wisdom because he has an inner teacher: the Holy Spirit (1 John 2:20). The perfect takes away the imperfect (1 Corinthians 13:10). He does not fear lightening and storms, fires and floods of water, unfavorable configurations of planets and darkness of heavenly lights, for, having been elevated above nature, he rests in Christ by faith, and lives in him. He is not drawn away by the allurements of this age because he hears the more pleasant voice of Christ within him. He does not fear the power of the devil because he knows divine indulgence. The One who lives within him and conquers is more powerful than the devil, who in vain consumes himself with conquering that man. He does not follow the enticements of the flesh for, living in the Spirit, he perceives the riches of the Spirit. He mortifies and crucifies the flesh by the vivifying Spirit (Galatians 5:24). He does not fear the accusations of the devil because he knows that his intercessor is Christ (1 John 2:2).<sup>210</sup>

May the author and giver of this only true rest of the soul, our Lord God of the blessed in all ages, grant it to us.

---

<sup>209</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> Century painter, credited with the first ever self-portrait, and employed by Alexander the Great.

<sup>210</sup> 1 John 2:1 in English.

### XXXIII. Concerning a pure conscience.

#### The right mind is conscious life.

In everything you do, have the greatest concern for your conscience. If the devil induces you to some sin, reverently obey the conscience's internal judgment. If you are afraid to sin in the presence of other men, you should be much more afraid of sinning in the presence of your own conscience. Inner testimony is more effective than external testimony. Although, then, your sins may flee from the accusations of men, they can nevertheless never flee from the internal testimony of the conscience. The conscience will be one of those books about which Revelation speaks, which is finally going to be opened in the Judgment (Revelation 20:12 and Chapter 5). The first book is divine omniscience, from which all the deeds, words, and thoughts of men will shine forth plainly. The second book is Christ, which is the Book of Life. Whoever is found<sup>211</sup> recorded in this book through true faith (Revelation 13:8) will be led by angels into the heavenly curia. The third book is Scripture, according to which our faith and works are set to be judged. "The word which I have spoken," says the Savior, "will judge him in the Last Day" (John 12:48). The fourth book contains the external testimony of the poor, who will receive us into the eternal tabernacle<sup>212</sup> (Luke 16:9). The fifth book contains the internal testimony of conscience, for conscience is the codex, in which all sins are inscribed.<sup>213</sup> The conscience is a grand volume, in which all sins are inscribed with the pen of truth. The damned are not able to deny their sins in the Judgment, because they will be convicted by the testimony of their own consciences. They are not able to flee from the accusation of sins, because the tribunal of conscience dwells within them.

A pure conscience is the clearest mirror of the soul, in which one contemplates himself and God. The splendor of the true Light is unable to be seen when its clarity is sullied. Hence, our Savior says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God" (Matthew 5:8). Just as men look favorably on a beautiful and clean face, so also, the pure and clean conscience is acceptable in the eyes of God, but a putrid conscience brings forth the immortal worms. Therefore, in the present time, we must perceive and suffocate the worm of the conscience<sup>214</sup> and not sustain it into immortality. For an escape from this book [conscience], all the others have been invented. What does great knowledge benefit, if a clean conscience is absent? It is not with the book of knowledge, but of conscience, that you will eventually be judged before the throne of God. If you want to write this book correctly, write it according to the example of the Book of Life. The Book of Life is Christ. Let your profession of faith conform to the norm of the teachings of Christ. Let the course of your life conform to the life of Christ. One will have a good conscience, if he has purity in the heart, truth in the mouth, and honesty in action. Use the conscience as a light in every action. It, indeed, will internally show which actions in life are either good or evil.

Flee this judgment of conscience, in which one is at the same time defendant, plaintiff, witness, judge, torturer, prison, whip, executioner, and hangman. How will one be able to flee this, when he himself is the witness that accuses, and nothing can be hidden from him [conscience] who judges? What benefit is there, if all praise you and, nevertheless, conscience accuses you<sup>215</sup>? What will be able to stand in your way, if all detract, but conscience defends you? This one judge alone is sufficient for accusing, for judging, for damning. This judge is unbiased and cannot be swayed by prayers or bribed with monies. Wherever you go, wherever you are, your conscience goes with you, bearing with it whatever you have accomplished: whether good or bad. It guards in this life and restores in death the deposit that it received for safekeeping. As a man's enemies are truly of his own house, so also, in the house of your own person and from your own family, you have accusers, observers, and torturers. What does it benefit you to live in the plenty of all abundance and yet be tortured by the whip of conscience? The fountain of blessedness and misery is in the soul itself. What does it benefit, when

<sup>211</sup> Invenitur *BCDG*.

<sup>212</sup> Aeterna tabernacula *G*.

<sup>213</sup> Scribuntur *BCDG*.

<sup>214</sup> Est *add. CDG*.

<sup>215</sup> Te *om. CDG*.

burning with fevers, to be placed upon a golden couch? Of what benefit is it to rejoice in a heap of external happiness, when a conscience is troubled by one's deeds?

As much concern as one has for eternal salvation, that much one will have for conscience. For faith is lost when a good conscience has been lost. When faith is lost, the grace of God is lost. When the grace of God is lost, how is one able to hope for eternal life? Whatever your conscience testifies, that you will expect from Christ in the Judgment. Sinners, needing no one to argue against them or to bring something into their midst, will themselves become their own accusers. Just as, in intoxication, when plunging himself into much wine, the drunkard never senses the damage from the wine and, nonetheless, afterward awakes from his stupor and suffers from the unwanted consequences of inebriation, so also, sin, when it is employed, darkens the mind and, as it were, truly obscures the brightness of one's judgment. Then afterward, conscience rises up and plagues with accusations more grievously than anything else could. There are three judgments: the judgment of the world, your own judgment, and the judgment of God. As you are not able to escape the judgment of God, you also will not be able to escape your own judgment, although it is admitted that you may at times escape the judgment of the world. Walls cannot hold back in the least bit this witness [conscience] who sees all your actions. What excuse will be able to defend you when the internal accusation condemns you?

A tranquil conscience is the beginning of eternal life. You will rejoice in the midst of anguish more sincerely and pleasantly with a good conscience than amidst pleasures with a bad conscience. You will be able to confidently stand against all detracting malevolence with the conscience's defense. Interrogate yourself, for you know yourself far better than other men do. In the Last Judgment, what will the false praise of others profit you, what will the false detractions of others hinder you? You will stand or fall by the judgment of God and not by the testimony of others. Conscience has no end, as the soul has no end. As long as infernal punishments press upon the damned, that long the accusations of the conscience will endure. No external fire can afflict the body to such an extent as this most serious interior flame can burn the soul. Eternal is the soul that is burned. Eternal is the fire of the conscience, which burns it. No exterior whips can molest the body as seriously as these interior blows strike the soul. Flee, then, the guilt<sup>216</sup> of sin, in order to escape the tortures of conscience. Delete sins from the book of conscience by real repentance, lest they are read in the Judgment and you must fear the voice of the divine sentence against you. Extinguish the worm of conscience through fervent devotion, lest it brings forth its horrible biting against you for eternity. Extinguish this interior fire through tears, in order that you may come to cool off in the pleasures of heaven.

O Lord, grant that we may fight the good fight (2 Timothy 4:7), retaining faith and a good conscience, so that we may finally come to the heavenly fatherland safely and unharmed.

#### **XXXIV. Concerning a zeal for true humility.**

**What is man? What is a bull<sup>217</sup>? They are nothing.**

Meditate, O faithful soul, upon the miserable condition of man, and you will easily flee from all temptation<sup>218</sup> that leads to arrogance (Sirach 10:9). Man is vile in his beginning, miserable in the progression of his life, sorrowful in his departure. He is assaulted by demons, provoked by temptations, enticed by pleasures, dejected by tribulations, implicated by crimes, stripped of virtues, ensnared by customary actions. Where then in dust and ashes is there room for arrogance? What were you before birth? A stinking seed. What in this life? A sack of dung. What after death? Worm food. If there is something good in you, it is not from you, but from God. There is nothing in you, except sin. There is no reason then for you to exalt yourself on account of anything within you, beyond your sin. Foolish and unfaithful is the servant, who wants to exalt his own good above the Lord's.

<sup>216</sup> Latin is *reatum*, a guilt liable to punishment.

<sup>217</sup> A papal document.

<sup>218</sup> Omnes sup. Tentationes *DG*.

Behold, O man, the example of Christ. He himself is served by all the glory of heaven, and for this reason he alone is true Glory. Yet, nevertheless he cast aside from himself all earthly glory. He still calls out, “Learn from me, for I am meek and humble in heart” (Matthew 11:29). The true lover of Christ is at the same time also an imitator of Christ. To whomever Christ is dear, to that one his humility is also dear. Let the arrogant servant blush and be put to shame, since the Lord of heaven is so humble. Our Savior says concerning himself, that he is “the Lilley of the Valleys” (Song of Solomon 2:1), namely, because he, who is the most noble flower, was born and is preserved, not in the mountains, that is, in hearts of arrogance and pride, but in the more humble valley, that is, in the contrite and humble minds of the pious. For truly, “the humble soul is the delightful seat and bed of Christ,” as a certain saint says. True grace does not extol, but humble. Whoever does not thus walk in humility of heart, is not yet a participant in true grace. The rivers of divine grace flow down, not up. As natural waters do not seek lofty places, divine grace does not flow anywhere except to humble hearts. The Psalmist says, “The Lord dwells on high and beholds the humble things in heaven and in earth” (Psalm 113:5,6). This is truly marvelous: that we may approach the greatest and most high God only in humility.

Whoever is vile in his own eyes, is great in God’s eyes. Whoever displeases himself, pleases God. God made heaven and earth out of nothing. As it was in creation, so it is still in the regeneration of man. God creates out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3); he restores out of nothing. Therefore, in order for you to become a participant in regeneration and renewal, you must be nothing in your own eyes, that is, you must attribute nothing to yourself; you must not exalt yourself. We are all weak and fragile, but judge no one more fragile than you. It does no harm if you judge yourself to be more infirm than everyone, and place yourself under all in humility, but it will harm you very greatly if you place yourself above another. The twenty-four elders, that is, the entire triumphant Church, cast their crowns before the throne (Revelation 4:10), attributing all righteousness and glory to God. What then may the vile sinner do? Seraphim—holy angels—veil their faces in the sight of the divine majesty (Isaiah 6:2). What then will man do, who is so much more vile a creature and unpleasant to his Creator in so many ways? Christ, the real and only-begotten Son of God, in a humility worthy of adoration, descended from heaven and took up in himself our fragile nature, sinking into flesh, death, and the cross. What may man do, who has departed so far from God through sin?

Behold, O faithful soul, how our Savior has healed our pride by his stupendous humility! And yet do you still desire to exalt yourself? By means of humility and suffering, Christ entered into glory (Luke 24:26); and you desire to cross over into heavenly glory by the way of arrogance? The devil was expelled from the heavenly kingdom on account of arrogance; and you, when you have not yet come into heavenly glory, strive for it by means of arrogance? Adam was cast out of paradise on account of arrogance (Genesis 3:24); and you hope to arrive at the heavenly paradise by means of arrogance? Let us desire to serve, and to wash the feet of others with Christ, rather than to walk the dignified ways with the devil. Be humble in this life and exalted in the future.

Consider always, O faithful soul, not what you have, but what you lack. It is better to sorrow over the virtues you do not have than to choose to glory over the abilities you do have. Hide virtues; reveal sins. Indeed, it ought to be greatly feared that, if you reveal the treasure of good works through glory, the devil may deprive you of it through arrogance. Fire is best kept when covered with ashes. So also, the fire of love is never guarded more securely than when it is buried under the ashes of humility. Arrogance is the seed of all sin. Beware then of exalting, lest it should happen that we are cast headlong into the abyss of sin. Arrogance is a bed pleasing to the devil. Beware then of exalting yourself, lest it should happen that your soul is subjected to misery by the devil. Arrogance is a wind scorching and drying up the fountain of divine grace. Beware then of exalting yourself, lest it should happen that you are separated from divine grace.

Heal, O Christ, our tumors of arrogance. Let your holy humility be the merit of eternal life for us. Let it also be the example for our lives. Let our faith more firmly embrace your humility and our life more constantly follow the same.

### **XXXV. Concerning flight from avarice.**



### Who is really poor? The greedy man.

However much one appreciates the salvation of his soul, that much he ought to hate the sin of avarice. The greedy man is the most impoverished of all, for what he has fails him as much as what he does not have. The greedy man is the most afflicted of all, for he is good to no one, the worst to himself. “The beginning of all sin is arrogance; the root of all evil is avarice” (Sirach 10:15<sup>219</sup>; 1 Timothy 6:10). Avarice draws people away from God by turning their attention to created things. In the acquiring of riches, they sweat to possess them. In possessing them, they start to fear losing them. In losing them, they start to experience pain, and what is worse, the labor of greedy men not only passes away but also is most destructive. Either riches desert you or you desert them. If, then, you hope in riches, in what will you hope in the hour of death? How will you entrust your soul to God if you do not entrust him with the care of your body? You are in the care of the omnipotent God. Why do you doubt that God is able to sustain you? You are in the care of the omniscient God. Why do you doubt that he will want to sustain you<sup>220</sup>? You are in the care of the most abundant God. Why do you doubt whether he will be able to sustain you? You have the promise<sup>221</sup> of Christ, the Lord of the universe—of heaven and of earth—that nothing necessary for life will be lacking for those who seek the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33). Trust this promise of Christ. It will not fail. He is certainly the Truth (John 14:6).

Greed is the height of idolatry (Colossians 3:5), for it sets up creatures in the place of God. Avarice transfers the faithfulness owed to God to creatures. Whatever is loved more than God is preferred to God. Whatever is preferred to God is set up in the place<sup>222</sup> of God. Esau exchanged his birthright for food (Genesis 25:33); so also, many, in acquiring temporal goods, lose their portion of Christ’s inheritance in the heavenly kingdom. Judas handed over Christ for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:15). Greedy men hand over the grace of Christ for earthly riches. How can one aspire for the kingdom of heaven when he is daily filling himself with the husks of swine? How can one contend to elevate his heart to God when he seeks to find peace for his soul in riches?

“Riches are thorns,” says the Truth (Matthew 13:22). Whoever, therefore, loves riches, really loves thorns. O thorns, how many souls do you strangle! Thorns impede the growth of seeds. Similarly, concern for riches impedes the spiritual fruit of the Word. Thorns afflict the body with punctures. Similarly, riches vex the soul with cares. You are passing away if you collect treasures of only perishable things. Whoever gathers treasures in the earth is like those who hide their fruits in deep and humid places, not considering that there they will rot most speedily.

How stupid are those who set riches as the end goal of their desires! How can a corporeal thing fill the soul, which is spirit, when spiritual things on the contrary, by virtue of their very nature, so comprehend corporeal things that they never can be filled quantitatively by them? The soul was created for eternity. You do injury to it if you make the end goal of its desires temporal and momentary things. The soul, which is elevated more and more to God, is drawn always further away from the love of riches. All creatures, the closer they are to the heavens, desire and gather less, as is the case with the birds of the air who neither sow nor reap (Matthew 6:26). It is a good indication that a soul meditates upon heavenly things if it esteems earthly things lightly and despises them. Mice and reptiles gather in caves, and, indeed, in inferior places, for they are of a less noble nature than birds. It is a great sign that the soul has turned from God and affixed itself to earthly things if it adheres to riches with an inordinate love. God gave you your soul, and you cannot entrust the care of your flesh to him? God feeds the birds of the air, and you doubt whether he will sustain you when you have been created in his very image? God clothes the lilies of the field (Matthew 6:29), and you doubt whether he will provide for you when it comes to clothing? It is shameful that faith and reason are not able to accomplish in man what instinct does. The birds neither sow nor reap, but entrust the care of their bodies to God (Matthew 6:26). Greedy

<sup>219</sup> Verse 13 of Sirach 10 in the KJV rendering of the Apocrypha.

<sup>220</sup> Te *om.* A.

<sup>221</sup> Promissory note.

<sup>222</sup> Id locum C. id in locum DG.

men refuse to cling to the Word of God in faith until they have seen the sustenance he will give with their own eyes.

The greedy man is most unreasonable. Why? Because he carried nothing with him into the world, and yet nevertheless he is still anxious about earthly goods, as if he wants to carry as many of them as he can out of the world with him (1 Timothy 6:7). The greedy man is most ungrateful. Why? Because he benefits from the many good things of God, and yet he never elevates his heart in faith to the Giver of these good things. The greedy man is most foolish. Why? Because he relinquishes the true Good, without which nothing is truly good, and clings to those things that are not good without the grace of God. Whoever is bound by the love of earthly things does not possess them, but is possessed by them.

Greed is extinguished neither by abundance nor by want. Want does not diminish greed, because the desire for having what one lacks springs up when he is not able to obtain what he has long desired. Abundance does not diminish greed, because, as much as the greedy man acquires more, that much he also seeks more. When what has been desired by greed is acquired, a new material for desiring arises, as in the case of fire, which consumes wood increasingly as it is added. Avarice is a stream, small at its mouth, but later growing immense. Fix boundaries, therefore, for the desire of riches, lest it draw you into eternal destruction. Many devour in this life what they must later digest in hell. Many, while thirsting for profit, run into immediate annihilation.

Considering these things, devout soul, flee from avarice as much as you are able. You can carry nothing with you into the Judgment except that which you have given to the poor. Do not deny your perishing and transitory goods to the poor, for whom Christ did not refuse to give his life. Give to the poor in order that you may give to yourself. Whatever you have not given to the poor, another will have. The man for whom the Lord does not suffice is too greedy. He who esteems earthly goods greatly does not yet truly hope for heavenly things. How can he who denies the requests of his brother for earthly<sup>223</sup> substances give his soul for his brother (1 John 3:16)? The heavenly treasure is the hand of the poor. Place what you receive in heaven, lest it perish on earth. Do you want to present a sacrifice that is acceptable to Christ? Show kindness to the poor. The good we do for the members, the Head receives as if it has been done for himself (Matthew 25:40).

Christ says to you: "Give to me from that which I have given of myself (Matthew 25:40). Do good from the good I have given, that you may acquire good for yourself. Bestow your earthly blessings on others, that you may keep them, for you lose them when you serve others with them sparingly." Hear the warning of Christ, lest you will be forced to hear him speak in the Judgment, "Depart, cursed one, into the eternal fire, for you did not feed me when I was hungry" (Matthew 25:41). Alms are a holy seed. Depending upon whether you have sowed little or much, you will reap little or much (2 Corinthians 9:6; Galatians 6:8). If you want to be among the number of sheep, then show kindness to the sheep. The goats placed to the left will be terrified, not because they have been seized, but because they have not trembled with fear.

"Incline our hearts, O God, to your testimony and not to avarice" (Psalm 119:36).

## **XXXVI. Concerning the properties of true charity.**

### **Love marks the saints.**

True and sincere charity is a constant attribute of the pious. There is no Christian without faith, and no faith without love. Where the splendor of charity does not exist, there also the fervor of faith is absent. Remove light from the sun, and then you can remove charity from faith. Charity is an outward act of the inner man of the Christian. A dead body is devoid of respiration; so also, "faith without love is dead" (James 2:26). He who does not have the Spirit of Christ is not of Christ" (Romans 8:9). He who does not make use of the gift of charity does not have the Spirit of Christ, because "the fruit of the Spirit" is love (Galatians 5:22). A good tree is not recognized unless it produces good fruit than one can observe (Matthew 7:16). "Love is the bond of Christian

---

<sup>223</sup> Corporalem G.

perfection” (Colossians 3:14). Just as the members of the body are joined together through the spirit, that is, the soul, so also, the true members of the mystical body are united by the bond of love through the Holy Spirit. In the temple of Solomon, everything inside and outside was overlaid with gold (1 Kings 6:21); so also, in the spiritual temple of God, everything inside and outside is decorated with love.

Charity moves the heart to compassion; charity moves the hand to abundant giving. Compassion is not sufficient if it does not give way to generous alms. Nor are generous external alms sufficient if they do not proceed from inner compassion. Faith receives everything from God; charity, in turn, gives everything to its neighbor. “Through faith, we are made partakers of the divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4); however, “God is love” (1 John 4:16). Therefore, where love does not assert itself externally, let no one believe that faith is present internally. No one who does not love Christ believes in Christ. No one who does not also love his neighbor loves Christ. No one who refuses to serve his neighbor has already apprehended the favor of Christ. He does not have true faith in his heart.

There is no truly good work that does not proceed from faith (Romans 14:23), nor is there a truly good work that does not proceed from love. Love is indeed the seed of all virtue. There is no good fruit besides that which sprouts from the root of love. Love is the spiritual taste buds of the soul. Hence, it alone perceives everything good, everything arduous, everything adverse, everything laborious. The taste buds of love make even death sweet, for “love is as strong as death,” indeed, stronger than death, for love led Christ into death. Love also excites the pious so that they are not afraid to die for Christ. All the works of God proceed from love, even his punishments. So also, all the works of Christian men proceed from love. In everything that God brings forth for us creatures, love is displayed. The sun and stars shine, not for themselves, but for us. Herbs heal, not for themselves, but for our bodies. Air, water, beasts and all creatures serve men. So also, exhibit an entirely similar service to your neighbor.

Tongues do no benefit without love (1 Corinthians 13:1), for without love knowledge puffs up, but love edifies (1 Corinthians 8:1). Secret knowledge does no good without love, for the devil also has knowledge of mysteries, but love is truly an attribute of the pious alone. Faith that moves mountains also profits nothing without love, for such faith is only miracle working and not saving. Love excels beyond the gift of making miracles, for love is the unwavering mark of true Christians, while the latter is granted to the impious. It does no good to distribute all one’s possessions to the poor (1 Corinthians 13:3) if love is not present, for an external action is simply hypocrisy if internal love is not present. Streams of kindness profit nothing if they do not flow from the fountain of love.

“Love is patient” (1 Corinthians 13:4), for it is not easily angered by him whom it truly loves. “Love is kind” (*ibid.*), for, indeed, how will he who has given his heart, the height of the soul through love, then deny the lesser, that is, external kindnesses? “Love is not jealous” (*ibid.*) because it esteems another’s good as its own. “Love does not bring forth wrong” (*ibid.*), for no one carelessly harms the one he truly loves from the soul. “Love is not puffed up” (*ibid.*), for the members of the body are made one by love and one member does not prefer itself to another. “Love does not conduct itself indecently” (1 Corinthians 13:5), for it is a characteristic of a man prone to anger to act rashly, but love restrains anger. “Love does not seek its own will” (*ibid.*), for when one loves something, he prefers that thing to himself and seeks the benefit of that thing more than himself. “Love is not angered” (*ibid.*), for all anger comes from pride, but love casts itself below others. “Love does not contemplate evil” (*ibid.*), for whoever is known to contrive evil for someone is shown to not yet really love him. “Love does not rejoice in injustice” (1 Corinthians 13:6), for love makes others’ misery its own. “Love suffers all, believes all, loves all, bears all” (1 Corinthians 13:7). What love eagerly wishes to furnish for itself, that it does not refuse to furnish for others. “Tongues will cease, prophesy will be done away with, knowledge will be destroyed, but love will not<sup>224</sup> fail” (1 Corinthians 13:8). Any of its shortcomings will be completed in the future life, and its perfection will be augmented in the future life. God commanded that two altars be set up in the sanctuary and fire was transferred from the exterior one to the one inside. God has gathered a two-fold

---

<sup>224</sup> Non *om.* A.

Church: militant and triumphant. The fire of love will one day be transferred from the militant to the triumphant.

Considering this, devout soul, seek holy love. Whoever your neighbor may be, Christ chose to die for him (Romans 14:15). Why then would you refuse to extend love to the neighbor for whom Christ has not hesitated to extend his life? If you really love God, love also his image. We are all one spiritual body (Ephesians 4:4). Therefore, let there also be one spiritual soul. It is improper that those who will one day live as one in heaven should differ in the world. While we are of consenting minds in Christ, let us also be joined in will. We are servants of the one Lord (Ephesians 4:5). It is not equitable, then, for us to differ. A member of the body is dead when it does not feel concern for the others. Let the one who does not suffer along with another in pain not consider himself to be a true member of the mystical body of Christ. There is one God, the Father of all (Ephesians 4:6), whom every day you address<sup>225</sup> as Father, just as Christ has instructed (Matthew 6:9). How will they recognize you as a true son unless you in turn recognize his sons as your brothers? Love the man commended to you by God if he is worthy, for you should love<sup>226</sup> him who is worthy. If he is unworthy, love him anyways, for the God whom you serve is worthy. By loving the man who is your enemy, you will show yourself to be a friend of God. Do not<sup>227</sup> concern yourself with what the man may do to you, but rather concern yourself with what you may do for God. Do not concern yourself with the injury that your enemy inflicts, but rather be concerned with the kindness which he who commands you to love your enemies (Matthew 5:44,45) confers upon you. We are neighbors because of our earthly birth, brothers because of our heavenly hope. Let us therefore<sup>228</sup> love one another.

Inflame in us, O God, through your Spirit, the fire of love.

### **XXXVII. Concerning a zeal for chastity.**

#### **The mind of Christ is the seat of chastity.**

Whoever wants to be a true disciple of Christ ought to strive for holy chastity. The most kind God has a pure and chaste mind. You ought to invoke him with chaste prayers. A certain wise man (Berosus the Chaldean) said that the chastity of the body and the holiness of the soul are the two keys of religion and blessedness. If the body is not kept pure and immaculate from association with immorality, the soul will not be able to be inflamed with prayer. "Our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:19). Standing guard with the highest vigilance, let us not pollute this holy habitation of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15). "Our members are the members of Christ." Taking all care, let us not take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot. Let us cling to the Lord through faith and chastity so that we may be one spirit with him (Corinthians 6:17). Let us not join with prostitutes, lest we may become one body with them (1 Corinthians 6:16). The Sodomites, burning with lusts, were struck with blindness by the Lord, that is, bodily and spiritual [blindness] (Genesis 19:11). The same punishment still exists to this day for impious men. The lusts of the Sodomites were avenged when sulfur and fire rained down from heaven (Genesis 19:24); so also, God will kindle the fervor of perverse desires in the one associating with whores into an eternal flame. "This fire is not extinguished, but the smoke of torment ascends through every age" (Revelation 14:11). Outside, that is, outside the heavenly Jerusalem, there are dogs, that is, impure and lustful men (Revelation 22:15).

Christ has cleansed us with his precious blood in baptism. Let us be on constant alert, lest we contaminate ourselves with impure lusts. The very nature of such shameful acts leads impious men to be ashamed to perpetrate them in the sight of men, and yet they are not ashamed to perpetrate them in the sight of God and the angels. No walls can impede the eyes of God (Sirach 23:18)<sup>229</sup>, which are brighter than the sun; no

<sup>225</sup> *Sic . compellis AB. compellat C.*

<sup>226</sup> *amas ABC.*

<sup>227</sup> *Ne G.*

<sup>228</sup> *Nos add. G.*

<sup>229</sup> *Gerhard cites 23:28, but the KJV Apocrypha has it as 23:18.*

corner can exclude the presence of the holy angels; no retreat can take away the inner testimony of the conscience. It is marvelous that the fire of luxury ascends to heaven, when the stench of it nevertheless descends to hell. That brief, despicable pleasure prepares eternal pain. It is a moment that delights. It is an eternity that torments. There is a brief pleasure from fornicating. There is a perpetual punishment for fornicating. Let the memory of the Crucified crucify your flesh in you. Let the memory of gehenna extinguish the fervor of desire in you. Let the tears of repentance extinguish the ardor of lust in you. Let the fear of the divine nail your flesh, lest the love of the flesh beguile you. Consider that the appetite for lust is full of anxiety and foolishness. The act is full of abomination and disgrace. The result is full of regret and shame. Do not<sup>230</sup> rest your face upon the flattering of the devil, which incites you to lust, but rather focus on the sting, which trails behind him like a tail, which should be avoided. Do not<sup>231</sup> contemplate the brief moment of pleasure, but rather think about the eternity of damnation. Love knowledge of Scripture and you will not love the vices of the flesh. Always be occupied with some sort of work in order that, when temptation comes, it will always find you occupied. David was deceived while idle (2 Samuel 11:2). Joseph was not able to be deceived while serving (Genesis 39:9).

Consider death is imminent in every hour and you will easily spurn every pleasure of the flesh. Love temperance and you will easily conquer depraved desires. A stomach burning with undiluted wine drinks in lust. Chastity is endangered by pleasures. If, therefore<sup>232</sup>, you nourish your flesh with immoderate pleasures, you are feeding your own enemy. The flesh must be maintained so that it may serve; controlled so that it may not become proud. Consider the terror of the Last Judgment and you will easily extinguish the fervor of lust. Then the hidden things of the heart will be revealed (1 Corinthians 4:5). How much more will the deeds done in secret be revealed? A reckoning will be demanded for every useless word (Matthew 12:36). How much more concerning filthy words? How much more concerning impure deeds? As long as your life has been, that long your accusation will be. As many as your sins were, that many your accusers will be. Those thoughts, made worthless by our use of them, will not remain without discussion<sup>233</sup>. What then will it benefit you temporarily hide your sexual immorality in the presence of men when it all must be revealed to every eye on Judgment Day? What good will it do you to flee from the earthly tribunal of justice when you will, nonetheless, be unable to flee the judgment above? You will not be able to bribe this Judge with monies, for he is the most just Judge. You will not be able to move him with petitions, for he is the most unwavering Judge. You will not be able to escape his province or jurisdiction, for he is the most powerful Judge. You will not be able to fool him with vain excuses, for he is the wisest Judge. You will not be able to appeal to others concerning the sentence he issues, for he is the supreme Judge. There will be truth in the investigation, full disclosure in the verdict, severity in the execution<sup>234</sup>.

Therefore, O soul devoted to God<sup>235</sup>, always observe the terror of this Judge. In this way, you will not be deceived by the fervor of lust. Be a rose in love, a violet in humility, and a lily in chastity. Learn humility from Christ, your Bridegroom (Matthew 11:29). Great is the dignity of chastity, which<sup>236</sup> was consecrated in the body of Christ. Great is the dignity of chastity, for it makes us live in the flesh above the flesh. As nothing is viler than to be overcome by the flesh, so also, nothing is more glorious than to overcome the flesh. We ought to flee, not only external sexual immorality, but also impure thoughts. God is not only the Judge of external acts, but also of internal thoughts. Piety is often injured by the face and chastity is often harmed by the eyes. Hear that the Truth says, "Whoever gazes upon a woman with desire for her has already fornicated with her" (Matthew 5:28). No matter how difficult this struggle may be, the victory will be even more glorious. It is difficult to restrain the flames of lust. It stimulates the adolescent, inflames teens and young adults, fatigues the old and decrepit. It does not despise the shack. It does not revere the palace. Rather, no matter how difficult this

---

<sup>230</sup> Ne G.

<sup>231</sup> Ne G.

<sup>232</sup> In *add. G.*

<sup>233</sup> In *discessu A.*

<sup>234</sup> Excusatione A.

<sup>235</sup> Dei G.

<sup>236</sup> Quia *CDG.*

struggle is, the triumph will be most glorious. The first impetus of depravity must be immediately restrained. The embers of perverse thoughts must not be fueled and fanned into flames. While the Apostle warns that all vices are to be contended against, he nevertheless urges, not struggle against, but fleeing from sexual immorality. "Flee sexual immorality," he says (1 Corinthians 6:18). If a beggar from a foreign land should approach us in false simplicity in order to gain our favor by deceit, and we do not admit him, he departs. If we permit him to enter, he becomes a guest and gathers up gall so that, if we yet allow him, he becomes the lord. In a similar way, depraved desires stimulate us. If we do not flatter them, they depart. If you do not want this enemy to become your lord, do not receive it into the home of your heart.

Preserve us, O God, in holiness of soul and chastity of body.

### **XXXVIII. Concerning the fleeting nature of the present life.**

#### **What is the life of men? A cylinder.**

Consider, devout soul, the misery and fleeting nature of this life in order that your heart may be elevated to the longed for heavenly inheritance. While this life draws on, it also draws shorter. While it grows, it diminishes. Whatever it receives it at the same time loses. The span of our life is a mere point in time, and yet even less than a point. While we spin around, immortality is near. We are aliens in this life and home. Abraham had no foundation laid on this earth, but only a grave for an inheritance (Genesis 23). So also, the present life is a place of guest lodging and burial. The beginning of this life immediately marks the beginning of death. Our life is like sailing. Whoever sails, whether he stands, sits, or reclines, is always approaching his port and hastens to it, led by the impulse of the ship.<sup>237</sup> So also, we, whether we sleep or remain awake, whether we lie still or walk around, whether we will it or not, are always carried closer to the end by the momentum of time.

This life is more death than life, for every single day we die, since every day we lose some of our life. This life is full of past pain, present labor, and fear of the future. Life begins with weeping, for an infant begins life with tears, as though it had a premonition of future evils. It progresses in debility, for many diseases afflict us and many worries cause anguish. It ends in horror, for we do not depart alone, but come to it along with all our works, and pass through death to the severe judgment of God (Revelation 14:13; Hebrews 9:27). We are conceived in guilt, born in misery, live in pain, die in anguish. We are born in filth, caressed in darkness, delivered in pains. Before we are delivered, we burden our mothers. In the delivery, we tear them like viper fangs. We are foreigners in birth, nomads in life, compelled to migrate to death. The first part of our life is self-ignorance. The middle part is burial in worries. The end is oppression under the troubles of old age. All the time of life either is past, present, or future. If the present, it is unstable; if the past, it is now nothing; if the future, it is uncertain. We are putrid in our entrance, a bubble in all life, a meal for worms in death. We conduct ourselves on the earth; we wear down the earth; we will be earth. The necessity of being born was cast upon us, as was the misery of living the hardship of dying. Our body is an earthly habitation in which death and sin dwells, by which it is consumed daily.

All our life is spiritual war (Job 7:1). Above are demons keeping watch for destruction. The world opposes us from the right and the left. Below and within the flesh keeps watch. The life of man is military service, for in it there is perpetual wrestling between the flesh and the spirit (Galatians 5:17). What joy is it possible for men in this world, when nothing in it is secure happiness? What is able to border upon pleasure for us in the present life, when, at the same time that favorable things are perishing, that which threatens us does not pass away; when that which deeply pleases us here ends, and that place where pain never ends is always drawing nearer? What good<sup>238</sup> is a longer life since in a long life we merely do more evil, see more evil, and suffer more evil than in a shorter life? What good is a longer life, since in the Last Judgment there will thus be more accusations of sin.

<sup>237</sup> The same wind moves the ship and the passenger.

<sup>238</sup> Lucretius A.

What is man? The slave of death, a transient traveler, a light bubble, a brief moment, more worthless than an image, emptier than a sound, more fragile than glass, more changeable than wind, more fleeting than a shadow, more fallible than a dream. What is this life? An expectation of death, the stage of a laughingstock, a sea of misery, a half a pint of blood that the smallest misstep may spill or a little fever spoil. The course of life is a labyrinth. We enter this labyrinth at birth; we leave through the threshold of death. We are nothing but earth, yet earth is nothing but smoke, so we are therefore nothing but smoke. This life is fragile like glass, winding like a river, miserable like war, and yet it appears exceedingly desirable to many. In this life, a nut may appear splendid on the outside, but in truth, when you open it with a knife, you will see that it is nothing but worms and rotteness inside. Fruit grown in the region of Sodom may delight us with its outward appearance, but having been touched, it will turn to ashes. The happiness of this life may delight us outwardly, but if you reach to press closer to it, it will appear as smoke and ashes.

Do not choose, therefore, to devote your highest thoughts to this life, O beloved soul, but always aspire to the future joy. Compare the brief amount of time granted you in this life with an infinite and never ending eternity, and it will be clear that it is foolish to cling to this fleeting life and to neglect eternity. This life of ours is fleeting, and indeed, in it eternal life is acquired or lost. This life is most miserable, and yet in it eternal happiness is acquired or lost. This life is most calamitous, and yet in it eternal joy is acquired or lost. If, then, you aspire to eternal life, desire it with your whole heart in this fleeting life. Make use of the world, but do not let your heart cleave to the world. Negotiate in this life, but do not let affix your mind to this life. The use of external, worldly things does not cause injury if internal love is not joined to them. The fatherland is in heaven; the sojourn is in the world. Do not choose, therefore, to delight in the day by day lodging of this world, lest you are dragged away from the desire for the heavenly fatherland. This life is a sea. Eternity is the port. Therefore, do not choose to delight in the momentary tranquility of the sea, lest you fail to aspire to the port of eternal tranquility. This life is like an unfaithful lover who does not remain faithful to the ones who love her, but often flees from them, contrary to all conjecture. Why then would you want to hold trust in that one? It is most certainly dangerous to try to promise security for even one hour since very frequently it is in that very hour that this fleeting life ends. It is safest to expect the end of life to be present in every hour and to prepare yourself for that with serious repentance. In the ivy in which Jonah delighted, God prepared a worm to destroy it (Jonah 4:7). So also, in the things of the world to which many cling with love, nothing is stable, but the worms of corruption are born in those things. The world has already been completely destroyed by the disgrace of such things, so that it has even lost some of its seductions. Indeed, as much as those who do not consider it worthwhile to flourish with a flourishing world ought to be praised and commended, that much those who take delight to perish with a perishing world ought to be corrected and accused.

O Christ, draw our hearts away from the love of this age and stir up within us the desire for the heavenly kingdom.

### **XXXIX. Concerning the vanity of the world.**

#### **The eternal surpasses the perishable.**

Do not, O soul, choose to delight in the things that are in the world (1 John 2:17). The world and all that is in it will pass away (1 Corinthians 7:31), being consumed by fire (2 Peter 3:10). Where then will your love be? Love eternal good so that you will be able to live in eternity. Every creature has been subjected to vanity (Romans 8:20). Whoever thus joins his love to creatures makes himself subject to vanity. Love the true and reliable good so that your heart may be made secure and calm.

Why does the honor of the world delight you? When we are seeking the honor of men, we are unable to receive honor from God (John 5:44). Whoever seeks the honor of the world is forced to conform himself to the world. Whoever pleases the world is unable to please God (Galatians 1:10). All the things exhibited<sup>239</sup> by

---

<sup>239</sup> Are produced by.

perishable and unstable things are perishable and unstable; for this reason, worldly honor is unable to be stable. One may often be exalted to the height of glory and renown today and tomorrow be relegated to the height of ignominy. Desire to please God so that you will receive honor from God. Divine honor is true and stable. What good is it for a man to be considered great among men? As much as one is in the eyes of God: that much he is and nothing more. Christ used to flee when he was about to be crowned a king (John 6:15), but when he was going to be subjected to the shame and ignominy of the cross, he quickly offered himself up (John 18:4). In order that you may thus be conformed to Christ, delight more in the ignominy of the world than in its glories.

How will he who does not spurn the honor of the world on account of Christ pour out his very own life for him? There is no other way to attain true glory except through the contempt of worldly glories, just as Christ entered into his glory through the ignominy of the cross (Luke 24:26). Let your love be held in contempt, therefore. Let your love being vilified and repudiated in this age in order that you will be honored in the future. Christ taught us with his life how we ought to regard worldly honor. All the glory of heaven served Christ and, for this reason, he alone is true glory, and yet even he cast all glory aside for a time. Therefore, the more one is honored and abounds in the many bodily consolations of the world, the more he ought to be profoundly and intimately saddened, seeing that he is proceeding further and further away from conformity to Christ.

Human praise is useless if a bad conscience accuses within. What good is it for someone overcome with fever to recline on an ivory couch, while he or she is nonetheless tormented with burning? True honor and praise is the testimony of your conscience. Indeed, there is no more equitable judge of your deeds than God and your conscience. Desire to test all your deeds according to this judge. Are you not satisfied to be known to yourself and, more importantly, to God?

Why do you really have such an appetite for riches? He for whom God is not enough is too greedy. This life is the way to the eternal fatherland. Of what benefit, therefore, are riches? They greatly burden the pilgrim as cargo burdens a ship. For the servants of God, Christ, the King of heaven, is their riches. True treasure ought to exist within man, not outside of him. A true treasure is that which you will be able to carry with you to that universal judgment. All those external goods will certainly be taken from us in death. All those things that we have hoarded up will perish, but even more, their hoarder will perish if he has not become rich in God. Poor you have come into the world and poor you will depart (Job 1:21). Why ought the middle differ from the beginning or the end?

Riches ought to be regarded in keeping with their use. How little will they suffice then! The smallest gift of grace and virtue is much more beneficial than all earthly riches. Why? Because virtue pleases God and riches cannot, except through the virtuous use of them. The poverty of Christ should be more preferable to us than all the riches of the world. Poverty has been sanctified in Christ. He was poor in birth, life, and in death. Why would you hesitate to prefer poverty to worldly riches since Christ preferred it to the riches of the heavenly kingdom? How will the one who has not placed his body in God's care place his soul in God's care? How will the one who will not give up his riches for his brother give up his life for him? Riches are brought forth with ever-increasing labor, maintained with fear, lost with pain, and even more troubling, the labor of greedy men is not only for perishable things that are going to pass away, but also has destructive effects on him, as Bernhard teaches.

Your love is your God. Where your treasure is, there your heart is also. When you love those riches that are worldly and perishable, you are not able to love spiritual, heavenly, eternal riches. Why? Because the former weigh down the heart of a man and drag it downward while the latter certainly lift it up. "The love of earthly things is the birdlime<sup>240</sup> of earthly feathers," said a certain man from the ranks of the true lovers of Christ (Augustine, sermon 33, *de. Verb. Dom.*). The wife of Lot was changed into a pillar of salt to warn us still today not to look back upon the things that are in the world instead of maintaining the right way to the heavenly fatherland (Genesis 19:26). The apostles left everything to follow Christ (Matthew 4:22). Why? Because the knowledge of true riches removed their desire for false, so-called riches. Having tasted spiritual things, carnal things seem foolish. For him to whom Christ is truly dear, this world is disagreeable.

---

<sup>240</sup> A sticky substance smeared on twigs to catch birds that land there.



Why do you yearn for worldly pleasure so much? Let the memory of the crucifixion crucify all desires for pleasure in you. Let the thought of the fires of gehenna extinguish all lust burning within you. Compare the brief moment of pleasure with eternal nature of its punishment. Carnal pleasures are for brutes and likewise render us brutes. He who daily fills himself with the husks of swine does not crave the pleasantries of the heavenly kingdom. Let us mortify all sensual pleasures and, with Abraham, offer God the spiritual sacrifice of that beloved son (Genesis 22), that is, the desires of our soul, by voluntarily renouncing all pleasures and aspirations, holding fast to the cross.

The way that leads to the heavenly kingdom is not straight and sprinkled with roses, but rough and thorny. The outward man may grow through pleasures, but the inner man grows through the cross and tribulations. As much as the exterior grows, the interior diminishes. Pleasures serve the body, but in the mind of the pious, concern for the body is much less important than concern for the soul. Pleasure takes our heart captive so that no freedom to love God remains. Not pleasures, but the contempt of pleasures you will carry with you in death and to the Judgment. Let the fear of the divine thus pierce your flesh as a nail, lest the love of the flesh beguile you. Let the thought of the divine judgment continually survive in your soul, lest perverse judgment lead you into slavery to sensual appetites. Do not gaze upon the face of the flattering serpent, but rather contemplate at length the tail that stings so violently. Overcome through the grace of Christ in order to receive the victor's crown from Christ.

## **XL. Concerning the usefulness of temptation.**

### **The palm tree thrives under burdens.**

It is useful for the faithful soul to be tested and confirmed by temptations in this age. Our Savior himself chose to contend with the devil when in the desert (Matthew 4). in order that, for us and for our salvation, he could defeat him and be the faithful champion of our struggles. First, he descended into hell, and then he ascended into heaven. So also, the faithful soul first descends into the temptations of hell in order that he may ascend to the glory of heaven. The people of Israel were not able to occupy Canaan, the Promised Land, until their enemies had first been vanquished (Joshua 23:1). Neither is the faithful soul itself able to occupy the promised kingdom of heaven unless it has first come forth victorious over the flesh, the world, and Satan. Temptation tests, purges, and illumines.

Temptation tests, for faith, struck by adversity, is made firmer in the rock of salvation, propagates itself further with branches of good works, and is elevated higher in the hope of freedom. When Abraham, commanded by God to sacrifice his son, conducted himself obediently and promptly, the angel of the LORD appeared after the temptation, saying, "Now I know that you fear God since you have not withheld your only son from me" (Genesis 22:12). So also, in temptations, if you will sacrifice the son, that is, your own soul, namely, your own will, you will be regarded as one who really fears God and experiences in his heart conversation with the divine. Fire tests gold; temptation tests faith. As the strength of the soldier is made clear in battle, so also, the strength of our faith is demonstrated in temptation. When the gusts of wind and waves of water raged and scared those in the boat with Christ, how little faith some of his disciples had been endowed with was revealed (Matthew 8:24). The Israelites whom God ordered to be led out to conquer the Midianites were first tested by the water (Judges 7:4). So also, in the waters of tribulations and temptations, those who are going to enter the heavenly fatherland victorious over the enemies are tested. Therefore, whatever adversities, whatever temptations here befall the lot of the faithful soul do not exist as condemnation.

Temptation also purges. Christ, the Physician, employs many bitter grains for the pestilence of self-love and worldly desire. Tribulation excites the scrutiny of the conscience and recalls the memory of past sins. Even more, just as medicine protects the body from the contagions of disease, so also, tribulation protects from sin. Man is surely always inclined to fall. This is the case even more so, however, in times of happiness than in times of adversity (Matthew 13:22). The thorns of many are riches. Therefore, God plucks out the thorns, lest they be able to suffocate the soul. Many varieties of earthly transactions impede obedience to God. Thus, he

sends them sickness in order that, turning inward, they may begin to die to the world and live for God. “For many, it has been advantageous to have fallen from a high position, wages, or honor to the quiet of a more modest sort of life” (source not cited). Worldly honor lifts many to pride. God therefore sends contempt and removes the poultice of pride.

Finally, temptation illumines. Only in temptation do we recognize just how fragile and vain all the consolation of the world is. Stephen was being stoned when he saw the glory of Christ (Acts 7:55). So also, in calamities Christ shows himself to the contrite soul. True and substantial joy exists only from God’s inhabitation. God inhabits the contrite and humble spirit (Isaiah 57:15). Affliction is also temptation by which the spirit is made contrite and humble. For this reason, real and solid joy is found only in the afflicted soul. Temptation is a way to the knowledge of God. On this account, God says, “I will be with him in anguish; I will be with him and make him see my salvation” (Psalm 91:15)<sup>241</sup>.

Blind Tobias was<sup>242</sup> not able to see anything above him, below him, or in front of him—not even himself—but by the illumination of the angel Raphael, sent from God, he was able to see all which he was not able to see before, employing no other medicine than the gall of fish (Tobias, chapters 2 and 11)<sup>243</sup>. This happened in order to declare that our eyes are to be smeared and illumined with the gall of bitterness so that we may attain to a true knowledge of ourselves and of the world. Why does the apostle say, “Now we see in a dark manner” (1 Corinthians 13:12)? Because we know that in temptation God gladdens the elect under the species of sadness, vivifies under the species of death, heals under the species of sickness, and makes rich under the species of poverty. The cross and temptation ought to be gladly welcomed by the one who is grateful for Christ, the One crucified and tempted for us.

O good Jesus, scorch me here. Persecute me here so that you spare me in the future. O good Jesus, who oftentimes casts us away from you in order to spare us, work it that, by being smitten, we may return to you. Afflict and oppose the outward man<sup>244</sup> in order that the interior man may grow and be nourished. Battle in me against me, O good Jesus. Be the guide in my struggles and crown me with victory. Let<sup>245</sup> whatever adversity I experience in this life serve to strengthen and expand my faith. Run to the aid of my weak faith, O good Jesus. The holy prophet has indeed promised, “As a mother consoles her son, so also I will comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13). With greater care, a mother cherishes and nourishes a suckling infant; so also, good Jesus, lift up and confirm my feeble faith. Grant that your internal consolations may prevail upon me more than the contradictions of all men and of the devil, yes, even more than the thoughts of my heart.

O merciful Samaritan, pour biting wine into my defects; but also add the oil of divine consolation. Increase the cross; but also add the strength to bear it.

## **XLI. The fundamentals of Christian patience.**

### **Patience is at last the victor.**

Rest, devout soul, and patiently bear the cross placed upon you by God. Consider the passion of your Bridegroom, Christ. He suffered for all, by all, in all. He suffered for all, even for those who despised his precious passion, and wickedly trampled His blood under their feet (Hebrews 10:29). He has suffered by all. He was handed over by the heavenly Father (Romans 8:32); was crushed and forsaken (Isaiah 53:4,5). He was deserted by his beloved disciples (Matthew 26:56). He was rejected by the Jews—his own special people who preferred the thief Barabbas (Matthew 27:21,22). He was crucified by the Gentiles. He bore all the transgressions of all men; he was afflicted by every race. He also suffered in every way. His soul was sad to the point of death (Matthew 26:38), and as a sense of the divine judgment pressed upon him, he cried out that he

<sup>241</sup> Includes verse 16 in the English.

<sup>242</sup> Aut coram se errant *om. CDG*.

<sup>243</sup> Gerhard cites 2:11 and 11:13-15 but these verses do not correspond precisely with his subject.

<sup>244</sup> It seems there is a typo here, for the text has *heminem*, rather than *hominem*.

<sup>245</sup> Sis G.

had been abandoned by God (Matthew 27:46). All his members exude blood-sweat<sup>246</sup>. His head is crowned with thorns. His tongue tastes the cup of myrrh<sup>247</sup>. His hands and feet are pierced with nails. His side is wounded. All his body is whipped and outstretched on the cross (Psalm 22:17). He himself suffered famine, thirst, cold, contempt, poverty, mockery, wounds, death, and the cross.

How truly unjust it would be that the Lord should suffer and the servant be glad! How unjust it would be that the Savior should be punished most severely for our sins and that we would take joy in them! How unjust that the Head should be afflicted and the rest of the members do not suffer with him! Rather, as “it was fitting for Christ to enter into heavenly glory through his passion” (Luke 24:26), so also, “it is proper for us to enter into the heavenly kingdom through many tribulations” (Acts 14:22).

Consider also the large reward. “The sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the future glory” (Romans 8:18). Whatever our suffering may be, it is temporal, sometimes even for the length of only a day, while that glory will be eternal. God accurately observes all our adversities “and someday he will bring them all into judgment” (Ecclesiastes 12:14). How shameful it will be for us, therefore, to be present in that most august convention of the world and to be seen without the adornment of the cross and suffering!<sup>248</sup> He himself will wipe all the tears from our eyes” (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 7:17; Revelation 21:4). O happy tear, which such a hand and such a Lord would wipe away! O blessed cross, which will find a reward in heaven! David spent ten years time in exile but forty years in empire (2 Samuel 5:4). Here it is prefigured that the suffering is brief but the glory that follows is eternal. It is a point in time in which the saints, lamented in this age in which they have been gathered, are exercised through the cross; “so also, the prosperous morning follows the night of adversity” (Psalm 30:6).

Consider, in addition, the tribulation of all the saints. Behold Job grieving in the dung pit (Job 2:8), John fasting in the desert (Luke 3:2), Peter extended on a yoke<sup>249</sup>, James beheaded by the sword of Herod (Acts 12:2). Behold Mary, the blessed mother of the Savior, who acted as a type of the Church, the spiritual mother of the Lord, standing under the cross (John 19:25). “Blessed are you,” says Christ, “if you are persecuted for my name, for they indeed persecuted the prophets in the very same way” (Matthew 5:11<sup>250</sup>). O glorious persecution, which renders us so much in conformity with the prophets, the apostles, all the saints, and for this reason Christ himself! Let us therefore suffer with those suffering. Let us be crucified with those crucified. Let us be glorified with those who have been glorified. If we really are sons, let us not refuse the lot of the rest of the family. If we really desire to be heirs of God, let us accept all that involves. In reality, the sons of God are not only heirs of joy and glory in the future age, but also of sadness and suffering now in the present age, because “God chastises every son whom he receives” (Hebrews 12:6). He punishes their sins so that in the future he may spare them judgment. He multiplies tribulations here so that he will be able to multiply mercies there; and, indeed, as great as the persecution is now, it is not greater than the reward to come.

Consider the blessed condition of the cross. It pulls up the root of worldly love within us and sows the seed of the love of the divine in our hearts. The cross generates in us a hatred for worldly things and elevates the soul to heavenly things. In mortified flesh, the Spirit lives. As the world becomes bitterer, Christ tastes sweeter. The mystery of the cross is great, since through it God calls us to contrition, true fear of him, and to the exercise of patience. Let us open when he knocks and hear what the Lord says in us. The sight of the cross is despised in the eyes of the world and of the carnal, external man; it is glorious in the eyes of God and of the spiritual, internal man.

What could be repudiated by the Jews as more vile and degrading than the passion of Christ? What could be more worthy and precious in the eyes of God than that same passion? By all means, “this was the price for the sins of the entire world” (1 John 2:2). And in the same way the righteous man is afflicted: “the righteous die and no one cares” (Isaiah 57:1). But the cross is precious, for “precious is the death of the saints in the sight

<sup>246</sup> Florem A.

<sup>247</sup> Nyrrharum CDG,

<sup>248</sup> Wow! Perspective for our troubling times.

<sup>249</sup> Instrument of punishment, like a cross.

<sup>250</sup> Verse 12 is also included in this quote, although Gerhard does not cite it.

of Lord” (Psalm 116:15). “The Church, the bride of Christ, is black on the outside” because of calamities and persecutions; beautiful inside because of divine consolation (Song of Solomon 1:5).<sup>251</sup> “The closed garden” is the Church, and, at the same time, it is also every faithful soul, since no one knows its beauty unless he is within it (Song of Solomon 4:12). Never will we perfectly and fully feel the consolation of the Spirit until our flesh is afflicted externally.

If the love of the world lives in us, the love of God is not able to enter. A full jar cannot be filled with new liquid unless it is first<sup>252</sup> emptied. Let us pour out, then, the love of this age, so that we may be filled<sup>253</sup> with the love of God. In the same way, God himself extinguished the love of the world within us through the cross so that there may be room for divine love. Furthermore, the cross compels us to pray and gives an occasion for virtue. When the north wind blows on the garden (Song of Solomon 4:16), that is, when persecutions occupy the Church, then its aromas flow out; then those virtues, which are such a favorable scent in God’s presence, flow out and blow gently to him. The beloved Bridegroom of the soul is white and ruddy (Song of Solomon 5:10). White in his innocence and ruddy in his passion. And so that the beloved bride of Christ may also be white in virtues, she is made ruddy in suffering. Thus, out of even the hardest stone of affliction, divine grace is able to produce oil and honey. Thus, out of the bitterest root of calamity, divine grace is known to produce the sweetest fruit of eternal glory. May the same divine grace lead and introduce us to these. Amen.

## **XLII. How temptation is overcome by perseverance.**

### **Hope trusting in God is never left<sup>254</sup> ashamed.**

Holy Lord Jesus, dearest Bridegroom of my soul, when will it be that you will lead me into your most solemn nuptials (Revelation 19:7)? I am a foreigner here, exiled from you, but I believe most firmly, not doubting at all, that I will soon be released<sup>255</sup> from the chains of the body and appear before your face (Psalm 17:15). Fear and trembling have come over<sup>256</sup> me (Psalm 55:6<sup>257</sup>), for “I carry my treasure in clay vessels” (2 Corinthians 4:7). The mind is prone to errors; the will is prone to sins, whereupon “the spirit in me is not always willing, yet the flesh is always weak” (Matthew 26:41). “Sin has led me into captivity, and the law of the members wars against the law of the mind” (Romans 7:23). Fear and trembling have come over me, for Satan schemes against my treasure with his great craftiness, a most ardent zeal for doing harm, and the greatest power. He deceived Adam in paradise (Genesis 3), Judas in the school of the Savior (John 13:27). How will I, a miserable man, be secure from his craftiness? Fear and trembling have come over me, for I am still in the world, “which has been placed entirely under the evil one” (1 John 5:19). The delights of the world invite me, adversities in the way of the Lord terrify me, the enticements of the world allure me over and over again; the whole world is replete with traps. I am a miserable man. How will I be able to flee them? Joy opposes me. Sadness opposes me. How will I, a miserable man, be able to endure? Fear and trembling have come over me, for “it is God who works in me to will and to do” (Philippians 2:13).

I am afraid that my negligence and carelessness will compel God to take away that good which he has given to me. Indignantly, I abuse the remission of sins and spit upon the first gift of grace that has been given to me so that I fear that I will be deservedly removed from the things I have used unworthily by a secret and just judgment of God. I fear that I may be deserted by him whom I have repeatedly deserted after my first conversion. How seriously I am tormented by the thought that the most grave and severe Judgment follows

---

<sup>251</sup> Quotation marks are Gerhard’s.

<sup>252</sup> Prius G.

<sup>253</sup> Impleatur A.

<sup>254</sup> Recedit CDG.

<sup>255</sup> Corpore solutus A. Corporeis solutes G.

<sup>256</sup> Supra A.

<sup>257</sup> Verse 5 in English.

these benefits of God if they have been used unjustly! But I encourage myself with the infinite mercy of God who, as he worked in me to will, also will work in me to do. After all, “He is God and does not change” (Matthew 3:6). “His mercy has indeed been set upon me and it will not change” (Psalm 117:2). “The foundation of God stands firm” (2 Timothy 3:19). It is certainly firm, for it is in God himself, in whom nothing changes. It is certainly firm, for it has been confirmed with the blood of Christ, which always speaks before the throne of God (Hebrews 12:24). It is certainly firm, for it is securely sealed in us with the seal of the sacraments (Romans 4:11).

If I were to seek some way of salvation in myself, I would surely have to doubt concerning it. But just as all my righteousness is in Christ, so also, all my hope concerning salvation is in Christ. If Christ were apprehended by a free will, surely I would have to fear greatly, lest by my free will changing I should lose Christ. But since Christ has been found by those who did not seek him, he will surely not withdraw himself after he has been found. He who has led me over from the shadow of death into participation in the light will not permit that I be forced away into my prior darkness (Luke 1:79). For the gifts and calling of God are immutable because they are part of the will<sup>258</sup> of God (Romans 11:29). O that I really would also be immutable in good! That treasure is always present, but the hand that takes hold of it is at times listless. I will be able, however, to take hold of Christ, since he has revealed himself to me in the Word and in promises, and since he most mercifully grants me faith to apply his Word and promises to myself.

I will defend my faith by the use of prayer for assistance and protection. I will not send the Lord out of the cubicle of my heart before he allots salvation to me (Genesis 32:26). By the power of the Lord, I will be preserved to salvation (1 Peter 1:5). The power of the Lord encourages and comforts me, but my weakness presses upon and saddens me. Nevertheless, the power of the Lord is perfected in my weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). He who strengthens all faith will strengthen me. Divine grace encourages me, but my own unworthiness terrifies me. Yet if I were worthy, my salvation would no longer be by grace but by merit. If it is by works, it is surely not by grace (Romans 11:6). Indeed, grace is not grace in any other way unless it is gracious in every single way. For this reason, I do not look to my works. Where they err, God corrects them. What they lack, God supplies. What is sin, God removes. What he does not wish to impute to me in that way, then becomes as if it had never existed. So long, then, as my salvation is from God, it is for that reason firm (Hosea 13:9).

### **XLIII. Concerning daily consideration of death.**

#### **Meditation on death is life.**

O faithful soul, expect death in every hour, for it lies in wait for you in every hour. In the early morning, when you get up, consider that this could be your last day of life. In the evening, when you are about to lie down to sleep, consider that this could be your last night on the earth. Whatever you do, whatever you undertake, always first consider and determine whether you would do such a thing if you were going to die in that hour and arrive<sup>259</sup> at God’s judgment. Do you suppose that, if you do not consider death, it will cease approaching you? Do you suppose you will summon death if you think about it? Whether or not you have thought about it, whether or not you have spoken about it, death is always pressing upon your neck. Life has been given to you on loan, not as a rightful possession. In the same condition you entered the world, you will leave it. Naked you came; naked you will depart.

Life is a pilgrimage. While you have wandered around here for a time, you are nevertheless going to return to the Lord. You are indeed a tenant dweller in the world, not a perpetual lord of it. Consider every single hour an hour in which you hasten to that moment. We are mistaken when we are of the opinion that death is the last breath of life. Every day, every hour, every moment we are dying. Whatever is added to life is at the same

---

<sup>258</sup> Voluntate A.

<sup>259</sup> Esset *add.* G.

time subtracted from it. We do not meet<sup>260</sup> death suddenly, but we approach it minute by minute. This life is our course. We daily complete part of it. Life and death appear to be most distantly apart when there are really no other two things that are closer than death and life. The latter is always slipping away; the former is always approaching. As those making a journey on ships, being carried along by the wind, often approach the end without sensing or knowing it, so also, whatever we do or eat or drink or sleep, we always approach nearer to death. Many have passed through life, merely seeking after the means and supplies for it.

No one approaches death cheerfully unless he has composed himself for it for a long time. Die to yourself<sup>261</sup> daily in life so you will be able to live with God in death. Before you die, let the vices in you die. In life, let the old Adam in you die so Christ will be able to live in you in death. In your life, let the external man be broken to pieces so the internal man may be renewed in you in death. Death transfers us out of time and into eternity, for where the tree has fallen, there it will remain (Ecclesiastes 11:3). How carefully then ought we consider the hour of death! Time is slipping away, yet the span of eternity remains infinite. In time, therefore, prepare yourself for eternity. The manner in which we will exist in the future, either in blessedness or in misery, is determined in the one hour of death. In this one moment, eternal blessedness is obtained or lost.

Seek, O faithful soul, how you ought to carefully prepare for this hour. You will easily despise all worldly things if you consider that you are going to die. Consider your eyes darkening in death and you will easily avert them from vanity (Psalm 119:37). Consider your ears deafening in death and you will easily close them to all impious and filthy words. Consider your tongue stiffening in death and you will have greater care in your manner of speaking. Observe for yourself the sweat and agony of death and you will easily reject worldly pleasures. Observe for yourself the nudity<sup>262</sup> in which people depart this life and you will not be troubled by poverty in this life. Consider all the horrors of the body in death and you will easily scorn earthly splendor. See the lamenting of the soul forced to leave its home in the body and you will easily beware of all the guilt of sin. Consider the rotting that follows death and you will easily humble your carnal<sup>263</sup> arrogance. Consider how empty and devoid of all creatures you will be rendered in death and you will easily be able to turn your love from creatures to the Creator. Consider how anxiously death will scrutinize to make sure you carry nothing with you out of this life and you will easily despise all the riches of the world. Whoever is dying through sins in this life will cross through death into the punishment of eternal death. No one crosses over to eternal life unless he here has begun to live in Christ. In order that you may live in death, insert Christ in yourself now through faith.

Let death always be in your thoughts, for it is always in your expectations. Let us always carry death around with us, for we always carry sin around with us. "For the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23). If you really desire to flee the bitterness of death, keep the word of Christ (John 8:51). Faith unites and joins us to Christ. Therefore, those who are in Christ will not die, for Christ is their life. "Whoever clings to God through faith is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). For this reason, then, the faithful will not die in eternity, for Christ is their life. The people of Israel crossed through the Red Sea into the Promised Land while Pharaoh and his forces were wiped out (Exodus 14); so also, the death of the pious is itself the beginning of true life and the gate to paradise. The death of the wicked, however, is not the end of evils, but the antecedent to the following death, joined with the first. They pass from that first death to the second (Revelation 20:14).

The union between Christ and the faithful is so close that it is unable to be dissolved by death (Romans 8:38,39). In that dense shadow of death, the flickering wick of divine grace shines brighter before them. In the perilous journey of death, Christ provides delegations of angels for their protection. The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). The Holy Spirit will not permit that temple of his to be thoroughly destroyed by death. "The Word of God is the seed of incorruptibility" (1 Peter 1:23). That temple is not destroyed through death, but is hidden in the hearts of the pious; and he will vivify it in his own time.

#### **XLIV. Consolation in the death of friends.**

---

<sup>260</sup> Recidimus *D*.

<sup>261</sup> Tibi quotidie *CDG*.

<sup>262</sup> They take nothing with them.

<sup>263</sup> Tuam *add. BCDG*.

### **Life is gained in death.**

Consider Christ your Savior, devout soul, and you will not fear the terror of death. If, on the one hand, the violence of death grieves you, let, on the other hand, the power of Christ encourage you. The Israelites were not able to drink water from Mara because of its bitterness, but Jehovah showed Moses a tree, which, after it was thrown in the water, made it sweet (Exodus 15:25). If you are terrified because of the bitterness of death, the Lord shows you a tree, which converts it into sweetness, namely, the Branch coming forth from the root of Jesse (Isaiah 11:1). That Branch is Christ, “If anyone keeps his word, he will not see death in eternity” (John 8:51). Life is full of burdens. Therefore, the alleviation of them is good. The misery of the Christian, not the Christian himself, dies. The departure of the soul that we suppose to be death is not an exit but a transition. We don’t lose our loved ones<sup>264</sup>. We send them on before us. They do not die, but arise. They precede us, not leave us. They depart. It is not death, but departure. The migration of the pious is to renewal. The funerals of the pious are a kind of collection of interest, cashing in this life, on loan, for the real benefits in eternity. Our loved ones die. See in this that they cease sinning, cease being tossed about, cease being miserable. They die in the faith. See in this that they depart from the shadow of life so that they pass through to true life, out of darkness and into light, from men to God.

Life is a voyage; death is its safest port. Therefore, we should not be sorrowful that our loved ones have died, but we should rather be glad for them since they have come through the turbulent sea to their port. This life is a prison for the soul and death is its liberation. For this reason, Simeon, about to die, exclaimed, “Now let your servant depart in peace” (Luke 2:29). He desired to be allowed to depart as if he was here confined in a bodily prison. Let us be glad for our loved ones, therefore, since they have been freed from this prison and have attained to true freedom. So also, the apostle prays to be released as if in the earthly body he has been bound in some sort of miserable slavery (Philippians 1:23). Shall we be saddened, then, that our loved ones have struggled out of these chains to now be truly free? Shall we take up mourning clothes for them when they have been clothed in white robes<sup>265</sup>? For it is written “that white robes have been given to the elect on account of their innocence and palms have been put in their hands on account of their victory” (Revelation 7:9). Shall we vex ourselves with tears and groans for them when “God will wipe every tear from their eyes” (Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 7:17)? Shall we mourn on account of them, and bring forth more sadness with our labors for them, when they are in such a place “where neither sorrow, nor pain, nor weeping is heard any more” (Revelation 21:4), and “they rest from their labors” (Revelation 14:13)? Shall we become thoroughly and immoderately sorrowful because of their departure when they are hidden in the true consortium of the angels and are enjoying substantial joy? Shall we lift up a weeping voice for them when “they sing a new song in the presence of the Lamb, having harps and golden censers” (Revelation 5:8,9)? Shall we grieve when they have departed from this world, when they themselves are glad that they have departed?

Christ shows how greatly it profits one to exit this world when he responded to his disciples, saddened that he was about to leave them, “If you loved me, you would be glad” (John 14:28). If you were sailing in a wild and vicious storm, with waves stirred up by the power of the wind, and you predicted a future shipwreck, would you not most speedily pray for a port? Behold, the world totters and wavers, and not only its old age testifies to its approaching ruin, but also the fact that all things come to an end. And do you not thank God, and will you not be glad, that your loved ones have at a fitting time been spared and delivered from that final destruction and shipwreck, and the imminent plagues? In which of your hands can salvation be gathered more securely than in the hands of Christ? In which of your places can the soul abide more safely than in the kingdom of paradise?

Hear what the apostle says concerning death: “Death is gain” (Philippians 1:21). It is gain to have escaped the increase of sin, gain to have fled deterioration, gain to have passed through to better things. If those

---

<sup>264</sup> Gerhard simply says “ours” over and over again.

<sup>265</sup> Gerhard repeatedly uses “alb” for white robe.

whom you have lost through death were very dear to you, let God, who wanted to bring them to him, be dearer. Do not be angry with the Lord, who has taken nothing away except what he has given (Job 1:21). He has received his own; he has not taken yours away. Do not be angry with the Lord for receiving back what he had given as a loan. The Lord alone foresees the approaching evils. Therefore he chose to look out for your loved ones, lest they be entangled by impending misfortunes. “The dead in the Lord rest pleasantly in their graves” (Revelation 14:13), while those who survive them, even those in royal palaces,<sup>266</sup> are seriously troubled.

If you have lost dear ones through death, believe that you will receive them again as dearer than before. On the one hand, for a brief space of time they are separated from you; on the other hand, for a blessed and secure eternity you will be reunited. Indeed, we place our hope in the most truthful promise concerning this life, that we are promised to migrate, as those of our loved ones have migrated already, to the life to come, where those loved ones will be much better known by us and also much dearer to us, and we will love them without any fear of dissension. No matter how many souls there will be and how many went before us:

The great theatre will receive us with joy. Here it will be right to recognize the face of our people.

And also to give mutual words in alternating sounds. Here, sister will go with brother, children with parents.

No evening will end the feast day. (*Bapt. Mant.*)<sup>267</sup>

Therefore, do not reflect so much upon the time of your loved ones’ departure, but rather upon the time of reunion, when they will actually be restored to you in the resurrection (Acts 3:20). Where there is a firm faith in the resurrection, in that place there is no appearance of death, but rather of rest. All the things of nature are a mirror of the resurrection. Light, setting daily, shines forth daily. Plants, having died off in the winter, are truly revived. The phoenix produces itself again in death. Where the seasons end, they begin. Fruit is consumed and returns. The seed does not grow fruitful unless it first falls to the ground and decays. All things are preserved by perishing; all things are renewed via death. Shall we then hold that God has placed such types in nature to no end? Should nature be more powerful than God who foretold the resurrection of our bodies? He who makes dead and putrid seeds of grain come to life (1 Corinthians 15:37), through which you live in this age, will to a greater extent also restore you and yours so that you live with them in eternity. God has called your beloved ones to their own beds. Do not, I beg, hold this safe rest against them. In a brief time, they will be present at the resurrection.

Perhaps you were hoping that your loved ones, before their death, would be useful members of the Church Militant; but it has pleased God for them to be members of the Church Triumphant. Let what pleased God also please you. Perhaps you were hoping your loved ones would acquire a knowledge of many things before departing; but it pleased God that they learn true wisdom in the heavenly college. This pleased God; let it also please you. Perhaps you were hoping that your loved ones would “be raised from the dust and be gathered with princes” (Psalms 113:8) before death; but it pleased God for them to associate with heavenly princes—holy angels. This pleased God; let it also please you. Perhaps you were hoping for them to acquire many riches before dying; but it pleased God for them to partake of the pleasures of the heavenly kingdom. This pleased God; let it also please you.

Holy God, what you have given, you have taken away. Blessed be your name forever (Job 1:21).

## **XLV. Concerning the Last Judgment.**

### **Revere the tribunal of Christ.**

“The Father judges no one, but he has given all judgment to the Son” (John 5:22). I know, Lord Jesus, that you are going to come as a strict Judge and will bring to light all the secret deeds and words and thoughts of

<sup>266</sup> e.g. David after Absalom’s death or the first son he had with Bathsheba.

<sup>267</sup> I have no idea where this is from or what the abbreviation means.



men (1 Corinthians 4:5). The severe Judge will be above; hell will be lying open below; the biting conscience inside; the burning fire outside; accusations of sin on the right; terrors of demons on the left; good angels to block us from heaven, and evil angels to drag us to hell.

Lord Jesus, to whom may I flee in this anguish of mine? “I fear all my works” (Job 9:28), knowing that you do not spare any delinquent. I will be placed between time and eternity, where time passes by and eternity still remains infinite in its span. The evil spirits will demand credit for all their works. All the evil that they persuaded here, they will produce in that most severe judgment, so that they may drag the soul with them into their fellowship in torment. “All the heavenly host shall be slowly consumed and the heavens will be folded together like a book; all the host of them will vanish as a leaf that falls from the vine and a fig from a tree” (Isaiah 34:4). “The sun will blush and the moon will be put to shame” (Isaiah 24:23). And if these works of your hands, which have never committed any evil, will flee from your face, how should I, a miserable sinner, be able to appear before your face? The heavens are not pure before you (Job 15:15). How will I, a wretched man, who drinks iniquity like water, be clean (Job 15:16)? And if the righteous man will scarcely be saved, where will the sinner stack up in comparison (1 Peter 4:18)? To whom, then, may I flee; to whom may I turn, except to you, O Lord? You will be the Judge of my sins, you who has died for my sins.

Indeed, the Father judges no one but has handed all judgment over to the Son” (John 5:22). The Father has handed judgment over to the Son, but the Son has in turn been handed over for our sins (Romans 4:25). “For God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, not in order to judge the world, but to save the world through him” (John 3:16,17). How, then, will you judge me, Lord Jesus, when you have been sent by the Father to save me through you? You have perfectly fulfilled the will of the Father in every way. How then will you not fulfill his will by saving a wretched man like me? “It is not the will of your Father that any of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14). I am also one of those little ones in your sight; a little one also in my sight. Indeed, what am I other than dust and ashes (Genesis 18:27)? Nor am I only dust and ashes, but I am also very small and puny in my progression in piety. Therefore, complete in me—a little one—the will of your Father.

“You have come, O Jesus, to save what was lost” (Matthew 18:11). How then will you be able to condemn him who desires to be saved? My sins accuse me and demand a severe sentence from the Judge, but you have transferred my sins to yourself. “You have taken away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). How would you have not also taken mine away? How will you, who has died for them, condemn me for my sins? “You have died for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). How not also for mine? Surely, Lord Jesus, if you wanted to judge me severely, what then compelled you to leave heaven, to descend into the flesh, into death, into the cross? Demons will accuse me and will require due payment from me for the works that they persuaded me to do. “But the prince of this world has been judged” (John 16:11). He has no part in you (John 6:56). And if he has nothing in you, surely he has nothing in me.

I certainly believe in you, Lord. For this reason, I remain in you and you in me (John 6:56). Satan will accuse me, your friend; he will accuse me, your brother; he will accuse me, a most beloved son of the eternal Father. How will you then severely judge your friend, your brother, and your Son? Moses will accuse me in that judgment. He will speak curses on me, “for I have not kept all which is written in the book of the law” (Deuteronomy 27:26). “Surely you, O Jesus, have become a curse for me in order to free me from the curse of the law” (Galatians 3:13). I will be cursed by Moses, but I will be blessed by you. Indeed, I long to hear that voice: “Come, blessed ones, inherit the kingdom of My Father” (Matthew 25:34). Moses will accuse me, yet you will surely not accuse me before the Father, for you intercede for me (Romans 8:34). Therefore, I do not fear the curse of Moses, for you have removed that handwriting which was against me (Colossians 2:14).

Damned ones will accuse me and proclaim that I am guilty of the same punishment as them. I admit, O Lord Jesus, that punishable guilt unites me to them. But my acknowledgment of that punishable guilt and my knowledge of your saving work distinguish them from me. “Whoever hears your word and believes in him who sent you has eternal life and will not come into judgment” (John 5:24). I hear your word, Lord; and I believe in you with faith, albeit it languishing faith—nevertheless it is faith. I believe, Lord, but help my unbelief (Mark 9:24). I believe, Lord, but increase my faith (Luke 17:5). Although I may not be free from all the sins of the

damned, yet you alone will free me from unbelief, O Lord. All those accusers terrify me, but you, the Judge, encourage me.

The Father has handed over all judgment to you (John 5:22); he has placed everything in your hands (Matthew 11:27). In turn, however, you have handed yourself for us all (Romans 8:32). You have handed yourself over for the Church in order to sanctify and cleanse her, washing her with water and the Word (Ephesians 5:26). How will you then judge those severely for whom you have handed yourself over to death, even death on a cross (Philippians 2:8)? “You will not have hatred for your own flesh. We are members of your body, from your flesh and your bones” (Ephesians 5:29,30).

## **XLVI. Concerning the desire for eternal life.**

### **Let the mind always look upward.**

Devout soul, you should not love the fleeting life, but rather the permanent one. Through desire, ascend to that place where there is youth without old age, life without death, joy without sadness, and a kingdom without change. If beauty delights you, “the righteous will shine like the sun” (Matthew 13:43); if speed or strength, “the elect will be like the angels of God” (Matthew 22:30); if a long and healthy life, there eternity is healthy and health is eternal; if satisfaction, the elect will be satisfied when they appear in the glory of the Lord (Psalm 17:15). If melody delights you, there choirs of angels sing without end; if worldly pleasures, “God will inebriate them with the river of pleasure” (Psalm 36:9).<sup>268</sup> if wisdom, the<sup>269</sup> wisdom of God will be shown to you there; if friendship, they will love God more than themselves, and they will love each other as themselves, and God will love them more than they love themselves. If concord delights you, there everyone will be of one will; if power, everything will be easy for the elect there; they will desire nothing that they will not be able to have; yet they will desire nothing except what God wants them to will and to desire. If honor and riches delight you, “God will set his faithful servants over many things” (Matthew 25:23); if real security, that will never and by no means fail them, just as it will never be lost by them of their own accord, nor will their loving God ever remove it contrary to the desire of their will, nor is there any will more powerful than God that could ever separate you from him. Whatever the elect can desire, that they will find<sup>270</sup> there, “for they will see<sup>271</sup> him” who is everything “face to face” (1 Corinthians 13:12). So great will the good things of their lives be, that they will not be able to be measured; so many, that they will not be able to be counted; so precious, that they will not be able to be appraised. In that place, there will be eternal health of body, highest purity of the soul, abundance of divine glory and pleasures, perpetual communion of angels and saints, and wonderful, glorified bodies. The elect will rejoice on account of the amenities they inherit, on account of the intimate fellowship in which they rule, on account of the glorified body they possess, on account of the world they despised, on account of the hell they escaped. The smallest crown of eternal life will be preferable to a thousand of the world’s crowns, for the former is eternal while the latter are all finite. Nor ought it be feared that jealousy will arise because of different levels of glory, for a unity of love will rule in the hearts of all. Because of that highest love, whatever one of the elect receives will arouse joy in the rest, as if they themselves had been given it. No one in heaven and earth is greater than God, and for this reason, there is no greater and more perfect joy than to see God, than to possess God. For this reason also, to see God for one moment surpasses every joy. For we will see God as he in himself is: God in us, and us in God (1 Corinthians 13:12).

In the journey through this life, we have Christ with us but concealed under Word and sacraments. We do not, however, know him by scientific knowledge. In the future life, we will see him face to face when he distributes the satisfying bread of eternity to us. In the same way, the disciples did not recognize Christ on their

---

<sup>268</sup> Psalm 36:8 in the English translations.

<sup>269</sup> *Ipsa om. BCDG.*

<sup>270</sup> *Inveniunt A.*

<sup>271</sup> *Intuentur A.*

way<sup>272</sup>, but rather while they were in their lodging, when he broke bread with them (Luke 24:31). That heavenly Jerusalem does not have a temple made by human hands, nor a sun or moon, because the temple in eternity is God himself and he is its light and illuminates it (Revelation 21:22). There vision will succeed faith, comprehension will succeed hope, and perfect fruition will succeed love.

During the building of Solomon's temple, the sound of an axe or hammer was not heard (1 Kings 6:7); so also, in the heavenly Jerusalem neither punishment nor tribulation will be experienced, for the materials of this temple, namely, its spiritual stones, were already previously prepared in the world through tribulation (1 Peter 2:5). The queen coming to Solomon is the soul striving for Christ in the heavenly Jerusalem (1 Kings 10:2). It advances, accompanied by many holy angels with precious stones of various virtues. It marvels at the wisdom of Christ the King; at his servants, that is, the ranks of saints and angels; at the food of his table, that is, of the abundance of refreshment; at the precious clothing, that is, the glorification of the body; at the beauty of his house, that is, the magnitude of the heavenly palace; at the sacrifice, that is, the multitude of divine praises. Overwhelmed with astonishment, one will confess that he could never have believed that which he now sees with his eyes.

Take heart then, O faithful soul, and consider the good things prepared for you. The spirit must set its eyes upon the things going to take place. In time, one must strive for that place where we will one day remain for eternity. He who does not desire to enter this glory of his Lord will not enter it. One day you hope to appear before God's face. Strive after holiness, for he is also holy (Leviticus 11:45). You hope for fellowship with the angels of heaven. See to it then that you do not repel their services by sin. You hope for eternity. Why, then, do you desire so much here in time? You seek future citizenship (Hebrews 13:14). Why, then, do you desire a permanent place here? You desire to come to Christ. Why, then, do you fear death? He, who does not want to go to Christ, fears death. You desire to enter into the heavenly Jerusalem. Why therefore do you soil yourself with so many sins, when it is indeed written that nothing polluted will enter into that city (Revelation 21:27)? You desire the fruit of the tree of life. Apprehend Christ, the real tree of life, for the first time through true faith here in this life, for it is written, "Blessed are they who wash their robes in the blood of the Lamb" (Revelation 7:14), "to have their right to the tree of life and enter through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

"Outside are dogs and sorcerers." Beware of impurity. "Outside are murderers." Beware of anger. "Outside are idolaters." Beware of greed. "Outside are liars." Beware of all malicious sins (Revelation 22:15). If you desire to enter the nuptials of the Lamb, desire the coming of the Bridegroom (Revelation 19:7). "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come'" (Revelation 24:17).<sup>273</sup> If you do not have the pledge of the Spirit (Ephesians 1:14), through which you call out that the Lord comes, the Bridegroom will never bring you into the heavenly nuptials. You are not the bride if you do not desire the coming of the Bridegroom. You want to have a place in the new heaven and the new earth (Revelation 21:1). Why, then, do you cling to the old things here? You want to be in communion with the Creator. Why, then, do you cling to needs of creation? You expect the building of God, the house not made by hands, eternal in heaven (2 Corinthians 5:1). Why then do you not desire to be freed from this earthly house of our habitation? You desire to be clothed. Why, then, don't you make sure that you will not be found naked?

If the holy Trinity does not dwell in your heart by grace in this life, it will never live in you in the future by glory. If in this life you do not taste the beginning of eternal blessedness, you will never perceive its full realization.

## **XLVII. Concerning the most blessed vision of God in heaven.**

**Heaven is the fatherland of the saints.**

<sup>272</sup> The road to Emmaus.

<sup>273</sup> The text reads: "*Spiritus est sponsa dicunt: Veni.*" This appears to be an error. I have amended the reading to: "*Spiritus et sponsa dicunt: Veni*" Also, the text cites Revelation 24:17. There is no such verse. This refers to Revelation 22:17.

“In My Father’s house are many mansions,” are the words of our Savior (John 14:2). I desire to see that place, O Lord, in which you have prepared eternal mansions for me. “I am a foreigner and a pilgrim here, as were all my fathers” (Psalm 39:13).<sup>274</sup> The days of my pilgrimage are short and evil (Genesis 47:9). Therefore, in this exile in the world I long for the heavenly fatherland. “For my citizenship<sup>275</sup> is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). “I desire to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living” (Psalm 27:13). This life passes by in image, “These days of mine are measurable and my substance is like nothing before you” (Psalm 39:6). What then is my expectation? When, Lord? When, Lord Jesus, will it be that I may come to you? When will I appear before your face? “As the deer pants for streams of water, my soul pants for you, O God” (Psalm 42:2).<sup>276</sup> O real and perfect and abundant joy! O joy upon joy, exceeding all joy, outside of which there is no joy, when will I enter into you so that I may see my God, who dwells in you? “Joy will fill me when I see your face, O Lord” (Psalm 17:15). “In your right hand there are pleasures without end” (Psalm 16:11). “I will feast on the abundance of your house and you will give me drink from the river of your pleasures. The fountain of life is within you” (Psalm 36:9,10).<sup>277</sup>

O desired life! O exceeding blessedness, in which the most holy Trinity is present, who will be seen without end, who will be loved without wearying, who will be praised without monotony, who will bring our desires to completion! Seeing God will surpass all joy. Seeing Christ, living with Christ, hearing Christ, will surpass all the desires of our heart. O Jesus Christ, the sweetest Bridegroom of my soul, when will you lead your bride into your royal palace? What could she possibly lack there? What more could she desire or expect in that place, “where God will be all in all” (1 Corinthians 15:28)? The sight will be beautiful, the taste as honey, the sound as a harp, the smell as incense, the touch as a flower. God will be everything and he will distribute good to each according to the desire of his heart. If you desire life, if health, if peace, if honor, there God will be all in all. What is here shrouded in mystery, even to the doctors of the church, there will be obvious, even to small children. Christ will be present with us in his blessed humanity, and in the sweetest voice he will preach on all of the once-hidden mysteries of our salvation. His voice is sweet and his face is lovely (Song of Solomon 2:14); grace pours from his lips and he is crowned with honor and glory (Psalm 45:3; Psalm 8:6<sup>278</sup>).

Furthermore, if God will be all in all, surely he will also be for us the full illumination of knowledge, the multiplication of peace in the will, the continuation of memory through all eternity. The Son will satisfy thinking with the fullness of knowledge; the Holy Spirit will satisfy the will with the kindest love; the Father will satisfy the memory with clear and unwavering recollection of both. “You, O God, will be a light in which we will see light” (Psalm 36:10)<sup>279</sup>, that is, we will see him in you—in the splendor of your face—when we will see you face to face. Nor will we only see you, but we will also live with you, and not only live with you, but also praise you. Nor will we only praise you, but we will be in your joyful communion. Nor will we only rejoice with you, but we will also be like the angels (Matthew 22:30). Nor will we be like the angels alone, but also like you, our God, blessed in all the ages (1 John 3:2).

The faithful soul is astounded here, and adores the mercy of its Savior. We enemies of God not only receive grace, but he remits our sins, gives us righteousness, leads us to a heavenly inheritance, and even goes so far as to make us like the angels and himself. O most blessed city! O heavenly Jerusalem! O seat of the most blessed Trinity, when will it be that I enter your temple? The temple of the heavenly Jerusalem is the Lamb (Revelation 21:22); yes indeed the Lamb who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29) and has been slain for them, all of them since the origin of the world (Romans 13:8). When will it be that I may worship my God in that temple, that is, worship God in God? When will that sun that illumines that holy city, rise on me (Revelation 21:23)? I am still exiled from my fatherland, but a splendid inheritance is in store for me (Psalm

<sup>274</sup> Verse 12 in the English.

<sup>275</sup> Gerhard uses the Greek, “πολιτευμα.”

<sup>276</sup> Verse 1 in the English.

<sup>277</sup> Verses 8 and 9 in the English.

<sup>278</sup> Psalm 8:5 in the English.

<sup>279</sup> Verse 9 in the English.

16:6). Believers, through Christ, have been given the power to become sons of God (John 1:12). “And if we are sons of God, we are certainly also heirs, yes heirs of God, indeed co-heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

Take heart, my soul, and aspire to your inheritance. The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and my exceedingly great reward (Psalm 16:5). What more than this can the loving kindness of God give? He gives life. He gives the Son. He gives himself. And if he knew anything greater in heaven or earth, he would give that to us as well. We live in God (Acts 17:28). We are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 3:16). We possess God here in spirit and mystery, and there in truth. There, what is our hope now will then be a tangible thing. There, we will not only remain for a while, but we will also live for eternity.

## **XLVIII. Concerning the most pleasant fellowship of angels in heaven.**

### **Heaven is our curia.**

“In the resurrection of the dead they will neither marry nor be given in marriage, but they will be like the angles of God in heaven” (Matthew 22:30). Is there anyone who is able to worthily celebrate this state of blessedness? What human heart has ever ascended to this blessed glory (1 Corinthians 2:9)? The elect, renewed in glory in the resurrection, without any fear of death, without any stain of corruption, will enjoy the salvific vision of God. “I have seen the Lord face to face and my soul has been kept safe,” exclaimed the patriarch (Genesis 32:20).<sup>280</sup> And if a momentary vision of God could bring forth such a heap of joy, what will the eternal vision of him produce? If God has appeared in the form of a man to bring salvation and life to the soul, surely, the vision of him face to face will convey life and blessedness for all eternity. What then can supplement this blessedness? What can the elect desire more than to see God? Yet at the same time they will enjoy nothing less than the blessed and delightful fellowship of the angels. Nor will they enjoy communion with the angels alone, but they will also be like them, that is, with agile, glorious, immortal bodies. We will be clothed the same as them, in white robes, ministering before the throne of the Lamb, singing the eternal song to the Lord (Revelation 7:9). With the same crown of virtue we will shine, and in the same privilege of immortality we will rejoice. “We will see the angels of the Lord and we will die,” exclaimed Manoah<sup>281</sup> (Judges 13:22). Yet we will see thousands of thousands, and ten thousand, a hundred each thousand (Daniel 7:10),<sup>282</sup> and we will live forever.

And if we will be like the angels<sup>283</sup>, surely we should no longer fear that we will ever be separated from them, making ourselves dissimilar to them by sin. We will take off the filthy rags of our sinful nature and our nakedness will be covered by the garments of salvation, and we will be clothed in the whitest of robes, the robes of innocence (Isaiah 61:10). In that place, no one is burdened, no one is angered, no one envies, no one is consumed by desire, and through no one does the ambition for honor and power pulsate. We will not be burdened with the weight of any sins, nor will we be compelled to lament the stain of sin with tears of repentance, nor are we going to fear the lethal wounds inflicted on our souls. “For the Lion from the tribe of Judah has prevailed” (Revelation 5:5). We too all prevail in his power.

And if we will be like the angels, there will doubtless be no desire in us for either food or drink. God will be our food with which we are thoroughly satisfied. God will be our food, which alone refreshes and is never insufficient. “The blessed will hunger and thirst no more; neither will the heat or sun strike them, for our Mercy-giver will rule them and he will lead them to drink from fountains of water” (Revelation 7:16,17). There floods of living<sup>284</sup> water will flow from their innermost being (John 7:38). There a mighty feast of the choice

<sup>280</sup> I don't see the connection to the cited verse, but that wouldn't be the first connection I've missed.

<sup>281</sup> Manuel A.

<sup>282</sup> *millia millium et decies millies centena millia angelorum*. I am bad at numbers so my translation may be off.

Daniel 7:10 in the NKJV reads: A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.

<sup>283</sup> Gerhard uses the Greek, “ισαγγελουι.” ©

<sup>284</sup> Vitae CDG.

pieces has been prepared, a feast of refined wine (Isaiah 25:6; Isaiah 66:11). We will feast and be merry and shout with joy in our heart (Isaiah 66:11). Lord Jesus, bring these things to fulfillment in spirit and truth. For the words that you speak to us are spirit and truth (John 6:63); and you declare the joy of the future life in the words of this age.

And if we will be like the angels, surely death should not arouse fear in us, for “death will be swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:55),<sup>285</sup> “death will be destroyed forever, and God will wipe away every tear from the eyes of his people” (Isaiah 25:8). Therefore, in that place there will be joy without sadness, which will continue forever. In that place, there will be health without pain, life without labor, light without darkness, love that never grows tepid, and joy that never decreases. No sigh will ever be heard. No pain will ever be felt. No sadness will ever be seen and we will always be full of joy. In that place, there will be great and invincible security, secure tranquility, tranquil pleasures, pleasant happiness, happy eternity, eternal blessedness<sup>286</sup>, the blessed Trinity, the Triune unity, the unified Deity, and the blessed vision of the Deity.

Take heart, my soul, and investigate further the honor conveyed upon us by Christ. We will associate with the assembly of angels and archangels, with thrones and dominions, with principalities and powers. Nor will we merely associate with them, but we will also be like them. There we will know our guardian angel, appointed to us in this life. Furthermore, we will not be deprived of his service there, but we will rejoice in his pleasant companionship. We will not desire his protection, but we will be glad for his fellowship<sup>287</sup>, and we will look upon him with well-focused eyes.

And if we will be like the angels, our fragile, debilitated, mortal bodies will surely be changed, being made into spiritual, agile, immortal bodies (1 Corinthians 15:43,44). The elect will be lucid because of their affinity to God, who dwells in inaccessible light (1 Timothy 6:16), and is clothed with light (Psalm 104:2). They will be incorruptible, for their bodies will be conformed to the angels’ bodies, yes even to the glorified body of Christ himself (Philippians 3:21). “What is here sown in corruption will be raised in incorruptibility. That sown in ignobility will be raised in glory. That sown in weakness will be raised in power. That sown as a natural body will be raised as a spiritual body” (1 Corinthians 15:42-44) “which will shine forever with splendor like that of the firmament” (Daniel 12:3).

Come, Lord Jesus, and make us participants in that glory.

## **XLVIX. Concerning the grave torments of hell.**

### **Always consider hell.**

Consider, devout soul, the gravity of infernal punishment and you will easily overcome every depraved desire to sin. In hell, every evil will be present and every good will be absent. What evil<sup>288</sup> can be lacking for those who are being punished on account of the greatest evil, that is, sin? What good can be present with those who are removed from the greatest good, that is, God? The heat of fire and the rigor of cold will be there. They will be in perpetual darkness there. There will be smoke<sup>289</sup> and perpetual crying. In that place there will be the terrible sight of demons clamoring for all eternity, along with burning, thirst, fever, the vapors of sulfur, the worm of the conscience, fear, pain, disgrace, dismay due to the revelation of all one’s sins, envy, hatred, sadness, the lack of the vision of God, the removal of all hope. By the power of God, the brightness of the fire will be separated from its burning power. The brightness will yield joy for the saints. The burning power will yield torment for the damned. It will not shine for the consolation of the miserable ones, lest they should draw joy from seeing it. Rather, it will work to increase their misery, as by its shining they merely discern more which they must suffer.

<sup>285</sup> Vs. 54 in English.

<sup>286</sup> Felix aeternitas, aeterna beatitas *BCDG*. Felix aeterna beatitudo *A*.

<sup>287</sup> Sociationem *A*.

<sup>288</sup> Malis *G*.

<sup>289</sup> Ibi *add. BCDG*.

Their face will be deprived of any sight of the sun, the moon, and all the stars, just as they will also be deprived of the sight of Christ and all the saints. Instead they will be punished with the sight of weeping, smoke, demons, and all the damned. The ears of the damned will hear screams and unceasing blasphemies, as they also hear the horrible roaring of the demons. Their taste will be afflicted with thirst and famine, as they are deprived of all the pleasures of meals and drinks. Their nose will be tortured with the vapors of sulfur. Their sense of touch will feel, within and without, the scorching fire that penetrates all the way to the marrow. The bodies of the damned will be deformed, obscured, sluggish, and burdened. Their memory will torment them with the recollection of their sins and they will grieve, not so much that they have sinned, but that they have lost their pleasures.

One little spark of hellfire causes sinners more suffering than if a woman's labor was prolonged for a thousand years. There will be weeping and pain and gnashing of teeth from the insanity of it all (Matthew 22:13). They will be tortured in the flesh by the worm of conscience (Isaiah 66:24). There is no vice without a specific torture designated for it there. Just as those in the kingdom of God will desire nothing they will not find, so also, in hell they will find nothing they desire. It will not benefit the damned in any way if they were occupied in this life with various pleasures, since their tortures will only be greater because of that. It will not benefit the damned in any way there if they were living in perpetual satisfaction and inebriation in this life, for<sup>290</sup> they will not be able to obtain even a drop of water (Luke 16:24). It will not benefit the damned in any way there if they were clothed in splendor here, for there they will be clothed with confusion and their bodies will be dressed in ignominy. It will not benefit the damned in any way there if they were established with honor in this life, for in hell there will be no honor, but rather continuous groans and pain. It will not benefit them in any way there if they have accumulated numerous riches in this life, for there all will be equal in poverty.

They will be removed from the beatific vision of God. This inability to see God will surpass all the punishments of hell. If those incarcerated in the prison of hell could see the face of God, they would feel no punishment, no pain, and no sadness. Nevertheless, they experience only the wrath of God and will never gaze upon his beatific face. They feel punishment from his face, yet they will never behold it. God's wrath proceeds to continually kindle the flame of eternal damnation and the terrors of sulfur. Not only will the damned be removed from the contemplation of the face of God, but they will also be subjected to the sight of torturing demons. They will feel the whips of those they followed as teachers in this life. If the sight of some sort of apparition in this life almost takes one's life away, who then will be able to endure the horrible sight of the demons in heaven? Not only will the damned be forced into perpetual converse with demons, but they will also experience perpetual torture from them for all eternity.

If the devil, with God's permission, afflicts the saints so seriously in this life, how much more then will he seriously torment the damned that have been handed over into his power? Not only will the damned be tortured by demons externally, but they will also be tormented internally by the worm of the conscience. Each and every sin which they have ever in any way committed will be the continuous object of their eyes. Yet their torment will still be all the greater, for none of the benefits of repentance remain for them. When the prepared virgins had entered with the bridegroom, the door was immediately closed. Recognize this door. It is the door of divine indulgence, the door of mercy, the door of consolation, the door of hope, the door of grace, and the door of holy conversion. The damned will cry out and say to the mountains and rocks, "Fall upon us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb" (Revelation 6:16). Yet how useless is that cry, for the heaven and the earth will flee from His wrath, just as it is written, "Every island fled, and the mountains were nowhere to be found" (Revelation 16:20).

Whatever God will give to the elect to add to their glory, that same thing will only serve to incrementally increase the torment of the damned. There will, no doubt, be degrees of punishment, yet whoever experiences less torment will not accordingly perceive any kind of consolation from it. Whoever is tormented with greater tortures will envy those who are afflicted less. It will be no consolation for some of the damned to know that certain relatives or friends of theirs have been received into the heavenly palace, for the elect will, in

---

<sup>290</sup> Quia G.

turn, feel no sadness on account of the fact that certain relatives or friends of theirs have been handed over to eternal damnation. The pain and the torture of the damned will be so great there that their minds will be unable to direct their attention to anything except to that which the force of the pain compels them to consider. The damned will be accompanied by a hatred of all of God's creatures. They will be accompanied, in turn, by a hatred of themselves. They will be accompanied by a hatred for the holy angels, the elect, and even God himself, not because of something in His nature, but on account of the effects of his righteousness.

All the evils of this life are singular. One is troubled by poverty, another is tortured with a serious disease; one is oppressed by the yoke of slavery, another is burdened by a load of insults; but there they will be tortured by every evil all at once. There pains will be universally distributed in every sense and body part. In this life hope works to alleviate every trouble, but there each one will be compelled to give up all hope. The punishment of hell is not only eternal, but it is also uninterrupted for even the slightest moment. And hence, if every man born of Adam up to the present day, along with those who will be born and live in the future, were compelled to suffer in hell equally among themselves even the slightest punishment assigned to just one sin, that would still be greater than all of that which has ever been suffered in this life by all the robbers and evildoers of this world.

O Lord, grant that we may consider hell, lest we burn there.

## **L. Concerning eternal punishment in hell.**

### **The torment of evil is eternal.**

Consider, devout soul, an eternity of divine punishment, and you will more correctly perceive the gravity of it. In hell, the flames burn and rage without end. The life of the damned is to die without end; the death of them is to live in eternal punishment. He who torments them will never become fatigued, nor will he who is tormented ever die. Thus, the fire there is always consuming so that it may always<sup>291</sup> be preserved. Thus, the torments there are always increasing so that they may always be renewed. The damned are always dying so that they may always live. They are living so that they may always die. The fact that one is going to be tormented without any end whatsoever further brings about the goal of utter despair. What indeed is more serious than to always want what will never be and to always not want what will never cease to be? In eternity the damned will not obtain that which they want, and that which they do not want, they will be forced to suffer.

When the wrath of God will cease, then the punishment of the damned will also cease; yet God's wrath is eternal, and therefore so also is their punishment. When the damned bring forth true repentance, they will be able to be delivered from their sins; but the time for repentance has come to a close and therefore no hope of indulgence remains. When the devils ceases to torment, the damned will cease to be tormented; but the fury of the devil will never cease and therefore the tortures of the damned will never cease. When the justice of God is changed, the punishment of the damned will also be changed; but the justice of God is unchangeable and therefore the punishment of the damned will be eternal. The strict, just sentence includes that those who never wanted to be without sin in this life will never be without punishment in eternity. It is fair and right that the revenge exacted from the damned should have no end since, while they were alive and well, they did not want any end to come to their transgressions. The damned have sinned in their own eternity, that is, while they lived. They would certainly not have wanted to have an end to their sinning if they had been able to live without end, as they would in that way be able to sin without end.

The fuel of the fires of hell is also eternal, namely, the stains of sin. Therefore, the punishment they merit is also eternal. The shame of the sins of the damned will never be removed from God's eyes. How then will the magnitude of the designated punishments for sin be able to be removed? Man has ruined the eternal good within him; therefore, by the just judgment of God, he has fallen into eternal evil. God created Man according to his image in the beginning in order that he may be able to live with him in eternity. God has

---

<sup>291</sup> *Semper om. G.*



renewed Man, having fallen into sin, according to His image through Christ. He has prepared the means of eternal salvation for all and has offered the rewards of eternal salvation to all. It is only right then that those who have chosen to go without the rewards of eternity should also be subjected to eternal punishment. The desire for evil will never be taken away from the damned. In the same way therefore, the punishment for evil will never be taken from them as well. The damned have chosen momentary pleasure and the finite good of the world over the infinite good: God. They have aspired toward the fleeting and brief delights of this life instead of toward the pleasures of eternal life. It is only fair then that they experience eternal punishment. O endless eternity! O eternity of immeasurable space of time! O eternity, unfathomable to the human intellect, how you will ever increase the punishments of the damned! After innumerable thousands of years, they will still be forced to consider that these are but the beginning of their torment. What a grave thing it is for one to lie immobile in the softest couch for thirty years. How intolerable will it be to burn in that lake of sulfur for thirty thousands of thousands of years?

O eternity, eternity! You alone increase the punishments of the damned more and more, and in every single way. The punishment of the damned is serious because of the bitterness of it. It is more serious because of the diversity of it. It is most serious because of the eternity of it. In that place, there will be death without death, end without end, disappearing without disappearance, for there death always lives, the end always begins, and the disappearance does not know a disappearance. The damned will seek life and not find it. They will seek death and it will flee from them (Revelation 9:6). After a hundred thousand of thousands, thousand years, they will revert to renewed punishments without end. The thought of the continuation of their pain will torment them more than the external sense of torment. What can be more miserable than to die in such a way that you are always living, to live in such a way that you are always dying? That life will be fatal. That death immortal. If you are alive, why do you perish? If you are dead, how do you always endure?

How such an eternity could exist, we cannot perfectly grasp. Indeed, that which cannot be circumscribed by any measure of time or comprehended by any created mind is uncertain to us. Nevertheless, if you presume to be able to estimate some space of eternity, you ought to then consider the time before the world. If you suppose to find the beginning of God, you will then also be able to discover when the house of the punishment of the damned will end. Imagine for yourself a mountain of the greatest height that exceeds the magnitude of the heavens and the earth. Imagine some bird was able to carry away from this mountain only the minutest grain of dust in a thousand years. One could hope, nevertheless, that after an incomprehensible multitude of millennia, the magnitude of that mountain would come to an end. Yet we cannot hope that the fire of hell will ever come to an end. The rewards of the elect will know no end, as also the punishments of the damned will not, for as infinite as the merciful works of God are for the elect, that infinite are the works of the justice of God for the reprobate. Suppose the various forms of torment for the damned to be as numerous as the drops of the sea. Imagine that after every thousandth year some little bird makes a flight and removes a tiny drop from it. It could be hoped that, in this way, eventually the abundance of the sea would be emptied. Yet one cannot hope that the punishment of the damned will ever come to an end.

O devout soul, always observe for yourself the eternal punishment of the damned, for remembering hell may prevent you from entering into it. Take care that you make use of the ritual of repentance while there is still time for indulgence. What else will the fire devour besides your sins? The more you heap up sins, the greater the reserve you are building to fuel the fire.

O Lord Jesus, who has made satisfaction for our sins by your passion, protect us from eternal damnation. Amen.

## **LI. Concerning the spiritual resurrection of the pious.**

### **To rise with Christ is life.**

The resurrection of Christ does not benefit you unless Christ also rises in you. As it is necessary for Christ to be conceived in you, to be born, to live, so also, it is necessary for him to rise in you. Death precedes

every resurrection, for one cannot rise unless he has perished. So it is also in regard to this spiritual resurrection. Christ does not rise in you unless Adam first dies in you. The inner man does not arise unless the outer man is first buried. The newness of the Spirit will not come forth unless the oldness of the flesh is first cut off. Nor is it sufficient for Christ to rise in you once, for the old Adam cannot be destroyed in one moment. Every day the old Adam wants to be revived in you. Every day it must be destroyed so that Christ may begin to live in you. Christ did not ascend into heaven, nor did he enter into his glory, before he rose from the dead (Luke 24:26,46); so also, you will not be able to enter into heavenly glory until Christ has first arisen in you and lives in you. The one in whom Christ does not live is not a part of his mystical body, nor will he be led by Christ into the Church triumphant unless he has become part of it in the Church militant. An engagement precedes marriage. The soul is not introduced into the nuptials of the Lamb in heaven (Revelation 19:7) unless it is first engaged to Christ in this life (Hosea 2:10) and sealed with the pledge of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, let Christ rise and live in you so that you may live with him for eternity. "This is the first resurrection. Blessed is the saint who has a part in the first resurrection. Over this one, the second death has no power" (Revelation 20:5,6). If you want to come into eternal life in the resurrection of the body, Christ must daily rise in you in this life.

Christ arose when the sun was rising. So also, if Christ spiritually arises in you, the light of the saving<sup>292</sup> knowledge of God will rise in your soul. How can the light of the saving knowledge of God be where the grave darkness of sins still holds a place? "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Psalm 111:10). How then can the wisdom of heaven be where the fear of God does not yet have a place? If one is truly devoid<sup>293</sup> of the light of the knowledge of the divine in this life, how will he become a participant in the eternal light in the future<sup>294</sup>? The sons of the light merely cross over into eternal light. The sons of darkness cross into eternal darkness. Christ has triumphed by rising from the dead; so also, he in whom Christ spiritually rises will cross over<sup>295</sup> from death to life (John 5:24). Nor is he in whom the Victor lives able to be conquered by death. Christ, by rising, brought with him perfect righteousness (Daniel 9:24). "Indeed, he died on account of our sins and was raised on account of our righteousness" (Romans 4:25). So also, he in whom Christ spiritually rises is likewise justified from sin. For surely, how can sin have a place where Christ's perfect righteousness flourishes and lives? Yet that righteousness of Christ's is applied to us through faith. Christ, by rising, has taken the victory back from Satan, for in his descent into hell he destroyed his kingdom, robbed his palace, and disarmed him of his weapons (Luke 11:22); so also, Satan can likewise never prevail over that one in whom Christ spiritually rises. Nor is that one in whom the Conqueror of Satan lives able to be conquered by Satan.

When Christ rose there was a great earthquake (Matthew 28:2). That spiritual resurrection with Christ is also not without serious commotion and contrition of the heart. The old Adam is unable to be destroyed without wrestling and opposition. Therefore, Christ is also not able to spiritually rise within us without great commotion. There is no spiritual resurrection with Christ, unless sin has been abolished. There is no abolition of sin unless the acknowledgement of sin has preceded it. True acknowledgment of sin is not yet present unless serious contrition of the heart exists there. Therefore, there is no spiritual resurrection of Christ unless the interior contrition of the heart precedes him. Holy Isaiah said, "As a lion, so he breaks all my bones" (Isaiah 38:13). See the great commotion. Yet he immediately adds, "Lord, so they live; in such things is the life of my spirit. You restore me and make me live; you have cast all my sins behind your back" (Isaiah 38:16,17). Behold the spiritual resurrection from sin.

At Christ's resurrection, the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and sat above the tomb (Matthew 28:2); so also, if Christ rises spiritually within you, you will be able to rejoice in the association of angels. Where the old Adam still lives and reigns, there is the favored bedroom of the devil. Where Christ truly lives and reigns, there angels rejoice to dwell. For it is written "that there is joy in heaven over one sinner being led to repentance" (Luke 15:7). And where there is true repentance, there also Christ rises spiritually. Where Christ has not yet risen spiritually, there the grace of God is not yet present. And where the grace of God is not yet

---

<sup>292</sup> *Salutis G.*

<sup>293</sup> *Est add. BCDG.*

<sup>294</sup> *Vita add. A.*

<sup>295</sup> *Transit BCDG.*

present, there also the guardianship of the angels is absent. Where Christ has not yet risen spiritually, there the old Adam still reigns. And where the Old Adam still reigns, there sin reigns. There the devil reigns. And what communion can angels have with the devil?

Christ, after rising, appeared to his disciples and showed himself to be alive (Luke 24:15); so also, if you have been made a spiritual participant in the resurrection through faith, show yourself to be a living member of Christ through love. Life is not discerned in a man if it is not manifested by the outward operations of life. Where Christ is, there also is the Holy Spirit. Where the Holy Spirit is, there he brings forth and incites every kind of good work, for “those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God (Romans 8:14). “If, therefore, we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25). The light of the sun scatters the splendor of the rays on every side. The light of faith spreads the fervor of love on every side. Remove light from the sun and you will be able to separate love from true faith. Sins are dead<sup>296</sup> works (Hebrews 9:14). If you walk in dead works, how can you be living in Christ and Christ in you? Sins belong to the old Adam. If the old Adam still reigns in you, how have you spiritually risen with Christ? Sins belong to the oldness of the flesh. If you walk in the oldness of the flesh, how will the new man live<sup>297</sup>?

Raise us, O good Jesus, from the death of sins, that we may walk in newness of life. Let your death destroy the old Adam in us and your resurrection call our inner man back to life? Let your blood cleanse us from sins and your resurrection clothe us in your righteousness. We, dead in sin, long for you, O true Life. We, lead astray<sup>298</sup> by sin, yearn for you, O true Righteousness. We, lost because of sin, sigh for you, O true Salvation. Vivify, justify, save.<sup>299</sup> Amen.

THE END.

---

<sup>296</sup> Mortui A.

<sup>297</sup> Vivet BCDG.

<sup>298</sup> Adversi CD.

<sup>299</sup> Nos *add.* BCDG.