
THE TRUE CHRISTIAN BELIEF.

We teach and believe, and this by virtue and power of the whole Scriptures, that the whole Christ Jesus from above and below, inwardly and outwardly, visibly and invisibly, is God's first and only begotten Son, the incomprehensible, eternal Word, by which all things are created, the first born of every creature; that he became a true man in Mary, the immaculate virgin, through the almighty, eternal Father, eternal Spirit and power, beyond the comprehension and knowledge of men; sent and given unto us out of pure mercy and grace, from the Father; the express image of the invisible God, and the brightness of his glory. We teach and believe that the first and only begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, is our only and eternal Messiah, prophet, teacher and high priest, who has fulfilled the required and commanded law for all his believers, inas-

much as they could not fulfil it on account of the weakness of their flesh; who taught us the good will and pleasure of his Father, and went before us as an unblamable pattern, and freely offered himself upon the cross for our sins, as a sweet-smelling sacrifice to the Father. Through whom we all, who sincerely believe this, have received the forgiveness of our sins, grace, favor, mercy, liberty, peace, life eternal, a reconciled Father and free access to God, in the Spirit; and this all through his merits, righteousness, intercession and blood, and not through our own works. Behold this is the true summary of our belief concerning Christ, our Savior, the Son of God.

All who can believe this, as certain and true, are sealed, through the word of God, in their spirit, are inwardly changed, receive the fear and love of God, and bring

forth, out of their faith, righteousness, fruit, power, an unblamable life and a new being: as Paul says, "With the heart, man believeth unto righteousness." Through faith, says Peter, God purifies our hearts. And thus follow the fruits of righteousness out of an upright, unfeigned, pious, Christian faith. Observe this well.

All those who sincerely believe the righteous judgment of God and his eternal wrath over all sin and wickedness, and do not doubt in spirit, look at the fallen angels; they look at the first, depraved world, at Sodom and Gomorrah, and upon disobedient, refractory Israel. They take particular notice how God humbled his innocent Son, who knew no sin, and in whose mouth guile was not found: how he was humbled, and made the most miserable among men for the sake of our sins. Yea, that he was so beaten and tortured, that while extended on the cross, he piteously complained to his Father saying, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. 27: 45.

All who truly believe this, will certainly flee from all unrighteousness, as they would from the fangs of a serpent; they turn away from all sins, and dread them more than a burning fire, or a piercing sword, for their whole mind and conscience testify to them, that if they knowingly and willfully sin against the law and word of God, and do not receive Christ in a pure and good conscience, live according to the flesh, and despise the inviting voice of God that they will fall under the dreadful, eternal sentence and wrath of God.

This the pious and aged Eleazar believed, who was well versed in the law, 2 Macc. 6: 18, and the god-fearing, virtuous mother, with her seven sons, 2 Macc. 7: 1, the three faithful young men in the fiery furnace, the beloved Daniel, and the fair, virtuous Susanna, the honorable pattern of all pious women, Daniel 13. They would rather endure for a season the wrath and fury of tyrants, than sin, and thus bring upon themselves the eternal anger and wrath of God. The righteous, say the Scriptures, live by faith. For the true evangelical faith, which makes the heart sincere and pious before God, moves, changes, urges and constrains a man, so that he will always hate

the evil, and willingly do the things which are right and just; even as it is unnecessary to admonish or warn a man of understanding not to cut his own throat, or drink poison, or thrust himself from a high tower, or run into deep water; for he well knows if he did so, he could not escape death. It is also unnecessary that we should admonish, or warn those, who sincerely believe that the wages of sin is death, that drunkards, liars, fornicators, whoremongers, adulterers, avaricious, idolators, blasphemers of God, envious, blood-shedders, perjurers, thieves and the like sinners, shall not inherit the kingdom of Christ, that they shall not get drunk, nor commit fornication, &c. The divine fear, which is of such a faith, warns, exhorts, reproves, urges and deters them, so that they will never more consent to such carnal, ungodly works, much less do them. For their faith, which is sealed of the Spirit through the word, teaches them that the end thereof is death.

We must thus believe with the heart, as Paul says; that is, we must so adhere to the word to receive and impress it upon our hearts, that we may never turn or be diverted from it, but that faith be more and more rooted in our hearts, that, through the virtue thereof, we may fear God with all our powers, and do sincere penance. Sincere, unfeigned fears drive out sin, for it is impossible to be justified without the fear of God.

Here observe, what an excellent, pleasing fruit of faith the fear of the Lord is; it is the only power which expels the sins of believers, buries; slays, destroys and makes sin nought, this is the first part of true repentance, as we are taught and admonished by the baptism of believers. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all they that do his commandments; his praise endureth for ever," Ps. 111: 10.

Further, All who comprehend with a sincere, unwavering, believing heart, the great solicitude and ardent care of God for us (here I speak of him according to the manner of man), and his unbounded kindness, mercy and love, as paternally manifested toward us through Christ Jesus, that he did not spare his eternal Son, by whom he created the heavens and the earth, the seas and

the fullness thereof, his incomprehensible, eternal Word, power and wisdom, but for our sakes, gave him over, humbled him, suffered him to endure hunger, and thirst, was derided, taken, mocked, his holy face spit upon, scourged, crowned with a crown of thorns, condemned, crucified and slain, that we, through his sickness and stripes, might be healed, through his poverty, might become rich, through his being despised, obtain glory; through his cursing, obtain blessing; through his punishment, receive grace; through his blood, the remission of sin; through his offering, be reconciled, and through his death, might obtain eternal life. He also created every living creature for our use, and made them subject to us. He serves and provides us with winter and summer, heat and cold, night and day, rain and dearth; to us he sent his holy apostles with his holy word, endowed us with his Spirit, enlightens, governs, admonishes, reproves and comforts us; he has given us the necessary shelter and food to supply our wants, and in the midst of a perverted lion-like generation, he has kept and preserved us by his grace, &c. I say, again, he who believes this with all his heart, apprehends and lays hold of it, can never be prevented, neither by angel nor devil, neither by life nor death; but must love this gracious Father, from his inmost heart, who has manifested so great love and mercy towards us grievous sinners; yea, praise, honor, thank, serve, and be obedient to him, all the days of his life.

For this is the greatest delight and joy of believers, that they in their weakness may walk and live according to the will and word of the Lord, and where the unfeigned, pure love of God dwells, there without fail, must also be the voluntary, ready service of that love, namely, the keeping of his commands. Solomon says, "They that put their trust in him shall understand the truth, and such as be faithful in love shall abide with him," Wis. 3: 9. And this is what Paul says, "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith, which worketh by love," Gal. 5: 6.

That love is of such an effective power and nature, may be very plainly seen in natural love; we need not admonish rational parents, to provide their children with neces-

sary food and clothing, for natural love will admonish them thereto. And thus with man and wife, who sincerely love each other with conjugal love; they think it no displeasure willingly to serve each other and be fellow helpers, as it becomes them, being one flesh. And so is also the nature and property of holy, divine love, for all those who by faith are one with the Father and his Son, Christ Jesus, in love and spirit, through the true and genuine knowledge of the aforementioned favor, need not be admonished that they should serve the Lord, seek the kingdom of God, use baptism and the Lord's Supper, according to the ordinance of the Scriptures, constrain heart and tongue, reflect upon the law and will of God with all earnestness, hear Christ and follow him, and that they should not love gold and silver, money and possessions, wife and children, life and death above Christ and his word. For the effectual nature of the ardent love of God, which is of a pure heart, good conscience, unfeigned faith urges and constrains, moves and operates so much in their hearts, that they stand prepared with body, soul, possession and blood, to do what he commanded them, and not do that which he prohibited; as we may see (God be praised) in great plainness and power, and hear daily of many pious hearts.

And it is hereby evident, if we would love God and walk in obedience to his commands, we should believe, have a special regard to his favors, and with the heart adhere closely to the word of his promise, as said; for that love which is sincere, is a very precious fruit, it is a branch and plant of faith from which the other part of true repentance flows, namely, the unblamable new life, represented to us by baptism, as related above, of the fear of the Lord: without which love, all eloquence, all tongues, all knowledge and understanding, all boastings of faith, learning, miracles, prophesying, alms, persecution, cross and suffering, are vain before God; yea, unfruitful and dead.

Every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth him, for God is love, such a one does all things according to the nature and word of the Lord, for it is the fulfilling of

the law, obedience to his commands, the bond of perfection and peace, and it is prefigured by the splendid girdle of Aaron and his sons.

Love, says Solomon, is as strong as death; jealousy is as cruel as the grave; the coals thereof are coals of fire, which have a most vehement flame; many waters cannot quench love, yea, so firm and strong and ardent is love that it surpasses every thing, conquers and consumes what is opposed to Christ and his word, be it world or flesh, tyrant or devil, sin or death, or whatever we may think of or name; and this is all through the power and Spirit of Jesus Christ from whom it originates.

Moses preceded with fear, then came Christ with love. First the terrific law, and afterwards the consoling gospel; first wrath in the feelings of our consciences, afterwards grace; first uneasiness of pain, then peace; first tribulation, then joy. In short, first the letter which killeth, then the Spirit which quickeneth.

Behold, my reader, such a faith as mentioned, is the true christian faith, which praises, honors, magnifies and extols God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, through filial fear and fruitful love, for by it we know the good will of the Father towards us through Christ; by it, I say, we know that all the promises to the fathers, the waiting of the patriarchs, the whole figurative law, and all the predictions of the prophets, are fulfilled *in* Christ, *with* Christ, and *through* Christ. That Christ is our king, Prince, Lord, Messiah, the promised David,* the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the strong Giant, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of peace, God's almighty, incomprehensible, eternal Word and Wisdom, the first born of every creature, the Light of the world, the Sun of righteousness, the true Vine, the Well of life, the true Door and Shepherd of the sheep, the true Foundation, and the precious Corner-stone in Zion, the right Way, the Truth and Life, the promised Prophet, our Master and Teacher, our Redeemer, Savior, Friend and Bridegroom. In

short, our only and eternal Mediator, Advocate, High-priest, Propitiator and Intercessor, our Head and Brother. And since we know all this by faith, therefore, I say, we also observe his word rightly, hear his voice, and implicitly follow his example, and counsel, and depart from ungodliness; the heart is changed, the mind is renewed, and with Moses we rely upon the future promises, as though they were in sight, and patiently wait for them with pious Abraham, till he, with all the chosen, shall in reality inherit them. "Now faith," says Paul, "is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen," Heb. 11: 1. He says, further, But hope that is seen is not hope. God, says Christ himself, is a Spirit: his word, grace, and the promise of the New Testament; his kingdom and government are spiritual; and thus we have to believe all things through an upright, pure, and sure faith, with a candid heart, and judge and see with spiritual eyes; but we may well say with Paul, "All men have not faith," 2 Thess. 3: 2.

Therefore, all those who stop their ears to the threatening, punishing and death-dealing law, and will not fear God, reject, and desire not the gracious gospel of Christ, shut their eyes to the light of righteousness, and will neither see nor walk the true way, harden their hearts, and will not acknowledge the just judgment of the wrath and displeasure of God, his mercy and favor and his unbounded grace, are unbelievers; for they reject Christ Jesus, run haughtily into perverse ways; they choose to themselves a righteousness and means of salvation contrary to the word of God; the wisdom of the Lord they esteem foolishness; his truth as lies; his gospel as delusion; the virtuous, christian life as madness; and the true use of his sacraments, as heresy. Open idolatry, commands of men, superstition and offensively ornamented lies, are their greatest consolation and true worship; their belly is their God; they love the world more than heaven; all their delight is in covetousness, avarice, pride, pomp, gold, silver, money and possessions; in buying and selling, they cheat and deal treacherously; their common life is drinking, gambling, cursing, swearing, hatred, strife and fighting; they follow the flesh in its lusts; they defame and seek

* Jer. 23: 5; Rev. 5: 5; Isa. 9: 5; John 1: 1; Col. 1: 15; John 12: 35; John 15: 1; 10: 2; 1 Cor. 3: 11; Isa. 28: 16; John 14: 6; Deut. 18: 18; John 3: 2; 15: 5; Tit. 2: 12; John 3: 29; 1 Tim. 2: 5; Eph. 1: 22.

the calamity of their neighbor, his dishonor, disgrace and shame. In short, they say, with the fool, in their hearts, "There is no God," Ps. 14: 1.

Although they boast of God with the mouth, praise his name with their lips, bow their knees outwardly before him, and say that they are redeemed with the death and blood of Christ; it is nevertheless vain hypocrisy, for they do it only from habit, and feignedly, and not inwardly through faith, in power and truth. They are those of whom it is written, "They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him; being abominable and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate," Tit. 1: 16. And this, because they do not believe Christ and his word, their end is death, as he says, "He that believeth not shall be damned," yea, is already condemned.

It is true what Paul says, "Without faith it is impossible to please him (God); for he that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," Heb. 11: 6. O for an open heart! For profound understanding! Yea, if we rightly examine these words, we have reason to be astonished at the wisdom and understanding of Paul. For if we rightly reflect upon the matter, we must ever confess before the Lord, who tries our reins and hearts, that we never believed it with the heart, that God is, and hence, we have led a vain, ungodly life. For it cannot be otherwise: if any one believes with all his heart, that God is, he will also believe that his word is true, that the wages of sin is death, that all things are open to his eyes, and that there is nothing concealed before him. That we must give an account of all our thoughts, words and deeds, before his judgment seat in the day of his coming. Believing all this, we then begin to be astonished before such an omniscient and righteous Judge, yea, to fear and tremble greatly.

In the second place, all who believe with the heart, that God is, they also believe that he is true, and therefore, none can be saved contrary to his word: for he is the God of truth, and in him there are no lies. His uttered word abides, it can neither be bent nor broken; those who thus believe, begin to fear his righteous judgment;

they cast behind them all their false patchwork, all false promises, all the bolsters and cushions of the false prophets, and they seek the Lord who has bought them. They are abased in their own eyes; for the heart is humbled. They sigh, weep, pray, lament, knock, and call at the throne of grace, till they are heard and encouraged by the word of his peace, comforted with the promise of his grace, and anointed with the Holy Ghost.

In the third place, all who believe that God is, also believe that he is gracious and merciful, that he has bestowed and sent us his only Son, that he taught us the right way, fulfilled the law for us, reconciled us to the Father, and redeemed us by his blood and bitter death; has conquered hell, the devil, sin and death, and obtained for us grace, favor, mercy, and eternal life, &c., and therefore, the sorrowful, afflicted hearts, which saw through the terrible, threatening law, nothing but the wrath of God and eternal death are again revived. They become candid, peaceable, and joyful in the Holy Ghost, are of a joyful disposition, and are thus made to belong to their Head and Savior, are united and made one with Him, ingrafted through the Spirit of God and pure, unfeigned love, that they are of one heart, one soul and spirit with him; they think, speak and live in their weakness as he has taught and commanded them in his word. They renounce and avoid all false doctrine, unbelief, false sacraments, and all idolatry; put off the spotted garment of sin, which is the evil perverted life, and is of the flesh. They seek the doctrines and sacraments commanded them of Christ; that divine service which is taught in the Scriptures, and that pious and unblamable life which is from God. For by faith they are changed in the inner man, converted and renewed, because they have a sealed, and assured conscience, which bears witness to them that God is, that he is righteous and true, gracious and of abundant mercy. And therefore they desire, seek and do nothing, either inwardly or outwardly, but that which they know, through the word, that Christ Jesus, with his holy apostles has commanded and taught them.

Behold, my brethren, here you have now

the true properties and nature of a true christian faith, and what a great mystery, signification, spirit and power are contained summarily in these words, *He must believe that God is*. "Whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life," John 3: 15; "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved," Mark 16: 16; "Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed," Rom. 10, and the like passages. For it will always be the case where there is a true, christian faith, there also will be a dying to sin, a new creature, true repentance, a sincere, regenerated and unblamable christian. One does no longer live according to the lusts of sin, but according to the will of him who purchased us with his blood, drew us by his Spirit, and regenerated us by his word, namely, Christ Jesus.

But where there is only nominal faith, and no righteousness, or change, or new and penitent life, there is nothing but unbelief, hypocrisy and lies. No matter how much we may speak, or dispute about the Scriptures, this rule will remain firm, and can never be broken. "*If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die*," Rom. 8: 13. All therefore, who live in pomp and splendor, in excessive eating and drinking, adultery, fornication, avarice, hatred, envy, lasciviousness, defrauding and such sins; all who defame the Lord's holy and high name, word, will, and also his community, slander and traduce their neighbor; deprive him of his honor, name, welfare, body and goods; and all who curse and swear by the Lord's sufferings, wounds, sacraments, cross and death, are unbelieving heathens, and not believing christians. This is as clear as the light of day, for their fruits testify before the whole world, that they are not the true olive tree and vine from which we may pluck or gather the true, ripe fruits; for, that they comfort themselves with the doctrines and commands of men, use a strange baptism, Lord's supper and divine worship, which Christ has not taught; seek the remission of sins by foreign means; such as holy waters, masses, auricular confessions, pilgrimages, &c., walk in a perverted, crooked path, believe not Christ and his word, all must confess who have only natural discernment and understanding. All who acknowledge

Christ to be the Son of God, and his word as the truth, acknowledge that his commands are eternal life, and that they seek no other worship, word, sacraments, or means of reconciliation, nor another way of life than that which Christ, God's own Son, presented and taught them by the word of his truth.

Hence it is evident, that where sincere and true faith is, which avails before God, which is a gift from him, and comes from hearing the holy word, through the blossoming tree of life, full of all manner of precious fruits of righteousness, such as the fear and love of God, mercy, friendship, chastity, temperance, humility, candor, truth, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, &c., there is a sincere, evangelical, pious faith; there also are the sincere, gospel fruits of an evangelical nature.

I say gospel fruit, for the strange fruit, such as infant baptism, masses, matins, vespers, caps, palms, crosses, chapels, altars, bells, &c., know not the gospel, for they are neither commanded of God, nor of Jesus Christ, his Son, nor by the apostles and prophets, therefore, are they abominations and not believing fruits, even as the golden calf was with Israel, the worship of Baal, the high places, altars and churches, and the crime of making their children pass through the fire.

The true evangelical faith looks upon, and has respect to the doctrine, ceremonies, commands, prohibitions, and unblamable examples of Christ alone, and strives to conform thereto with all its powers, even as fire in its nature can produce nothing but combustion and flame; the sun, nothing but light and heat; the water causes moisture, and a good tree brings good fruit after its natural properties; and thus upright, evangelical faith produces true evangelical fruit, and that, after its true, good, evangelical nature; yea, even as an honest, virtuous bride, by the virtue and the nature of natural love, is ever ready to hear and obey the voice of her bridegroom; and from a sincere, pious disposition, favor and love which she has for and towards him, will ever so conduct herself, before her most faithful friend and beloved husband, whom she respects and loves with all her heart, that for his sake she voluntarily

endures what ever may befall her; even also it is with a sincere, regenerated believer, who has been joined to Christ, by grace through faith; he has become one with Christ through this ardent love, that he is ever willing and prepared to do his bidding and will, to endure all things for the sake of the holy name of Jesus, in evil as well as in good report. Eager to endure all things that may befall him at any time, be it joy or tribulation, satiation or hunger, refreshing or thirst, honor or dishonor, in good or bad report, in prison or at liberty, in exile or at home, ease or discomfort, life or death. Such a

soul partakes of her bridegroom's nature and disposition, is pious in heart and thought; true in words and well seasoned; all her ways are righteousness, devoutness; wise as the serpent; harmless as the dove; a genuinely pious disposition, fidelity, zeal, peace, fervent prayer, an unblamable conduct, a sincere, pure, brotherly love, and a voluntary obedience to Christ and his holy word; for the righteous live by faith, as we shall incontrovertibly and plainly show, by the grace of God, in the following examples, recorded and testified to in the holy Scriptures, Amen.
