



Gisbertus Voetius

A QUESTION CONCERNING THE FAITH OF THE PAPISTS, WHETHER IT BE SAVING OR DAMNABLE?

Respondent: MELCHIOR B. BATZONINUS, Hungarian of Transylvania. On the 6th day of March, 1647.

There is a twofold question concerning the Salvation of the Papists: one is about the salvation of our ancestors who, before the time of the Reformation, especially in those most corrupt twelfth, thirteenth, and fourteenth centuries, remained in the communion of the Roman-Papal Church, and did not secede from it by an external and formal separation with the Waldenses, Albigenses, Wycliffites, and Hussites. The other is about the salvation of those who professed Popery at the time of the Reformation, especially those who even now today, after so great and so manifold a conviction, adhere to the same. We have dealt with the former question in "The Desperate Cause of the Papacy," book 3, section 2, where we determined from the common consent of the reformed, how, notwithstanding the torrent of corruption and Antichristian tyranny, our ancestors could have been saved by the singular mercy and providence of God: where also we have indicated the outstanding authors, the Centuriators of Magdeburg, the Catalogue of Illyricus, the Mystery of Plessis with the defense of Rivet, the treatise of Villerius on the Succession of the Churches, etc. Therefore, we do not repeat here what was said there and in the two immediately preceding Disputations, but only presuppose it, and undertake to defend it anew.

1. ****Consectary 1.**** They betray their ignorance of Orthodox Theology and all Ecclesiastical History who contend that in those corrupt centuries the faith, piety, and religion of all Christians in the Western Churches were nothing but mere idolatry, mere Antichristianism; and therefore, whatever was given by them for pious uses while they remained in the external communion of the Churches then so corrupt, was all dedicated to Antichrist, to idols, to demons (not otherwise than as was done by the Gentiles, as the Apostle says in 1 Corinthians 10:20), not to God, not to Christ, not to the Church, not to the Christian faith: consequently, those goods are not to be called sacred or dedicated to God, nor can sacrilege be committed by the fraudulent handling of them, nay, they are not even to be spent for sacred uses (e.g., the stipends of Ministers) and the like. Seek the refutation of this Paradox from the analogy of the donations made in the communion of the most corrupt Israelite and Judaic Church in the times of Athaliah, Ahaz, Manasseh, etc., and after the advent of Christ,

Matthew 22, verse 21, and Luke 21, verses 2, 3, 4. Indeed, the Apostle teaches in Romans 2:22 that sacrilege is committed by the removal of such goods in the communion of the Judaic Church, already rejected or soon to be rejected.

2. **Consectary 2.** More absurdly do they (historical apologists) who pass a similar judgment on the Western Churches from the fifth or sixth century onwards. Compare the preceding Disputation on the Method of refuting the presumed, etc., and on the Force of truth, etc.

3. **Consectary 3.** We deny that Willibrord, the first Bishop of Utrecht, as he is commonly celebrated, was the first herald of Christianity in Belgium, or in this our region. We also deny that he was formally a Papist. And even if both false hypotheses were granted, which they are not, we deny that succession, antiquity, and Catholicism should therefore be adjudged to the Papacy; much less the truth of the divine, Christian, Apostolic faith according to the Scriptures. Compare above the Disputation on the Planters of the Churches.

Therefore, we must now deal with the second question. In order to determine it correctly, we prefix these preliminary considerations, lest the less educated or the dissenters (as usually happens) should be hindered by ignorance and ambiguity of terms, and confuse their own concepts and those of others. Let us therefore distinguish: faith, the Roman or Papal Church, communion, salvation, and the present day.

I. Papist faith, or the religion of the Roman Church, can be taken either abstractly, in Idea, or objectively, and as it is and is considered in and for itself, namely, as it ought to be according to the Roman formula; or concretely, inheringly, subjectively, as and what it is in fact in this or that person.

In the former way, it can again be taken: 1. Either for the whole complex or monstrous compound of certain truths of the Christian and Catholic faith (e.g., concerning the one and triune God, the person of Christ, etc.) and of Papist heresies and novelties (e.g., concerning Indulgences, the Adoration of Images, the Sacrifice of the Mass, the power of the Pope, etc.). 2. Or precisely and formally for the Papacy alone, or the system of Papal heresy and apostasy, as distinct from the Catholic truths just mentioned, which are not directly and openly denied or abolished in the Papacy, and against which the Reformed do not protest, whereas they do protest against the Papacy or Papalism, that is, against the Antichristian tyranny, heresies, and idolatry.

In the latter way, it can again be taken in different ways: 1. Either for that which is held by someone living in the external communion of the Roman Church, and that more or less secretly or openly, according as the connivance, dissimulation, indulgence, and tacit protection of superiors, whether political or ecclesiastical, have intervened more or less here. Such, for example, was that of Paolo Sarpi, the Servite Theologian in Venice. Which, as to the substance and sum of the matter, plainly agreed with the reformed faith; although he himself, in order to care for the sheep of Christ there, did not externally and openly renounce all communion in and with the Church subject to the Roman tyranny. With what prudence and conscience (without offense) he did this or could have done it is to be inquired elsewhere. 2. Or for that which one holds and professes in the communion of the Roman Church, using the artifice of ambiguity or doubt, a political scheme, now affirming, now

denying, now reprehending errors and professing the truth, now again palliating, softening, or restricting, contracting, obscuring: so as at least to avoid the thunderbolt of excommunication or the attack of the Inquisition. Such was the faith of Erasmus, Cassander, and others of that stamp, flying between both sides; whose doubtful and ambiguous theology could not merit the favor of either of the dissenting parties, as the event has shown. To these add Milletier and Grotius, who most recently have made shipwreck of both their faith and their reputation. Compare the Disputation on Syncretism. 3. Or for a Skeptical-Roman and quodlibetical faith: which, as to the external practice of formalities and superstitions, is conformed to the Roman and Antichristian formula; meanwhile, in its theory and dogmatic theology (which is the foundation of its practice), it wanders in a labyrinth of probabilities, or verisimilitudes, or quodlibetical disputations, or incrustations, and in saying, says nothing, in believing, believes nothing: so that it can truly be called Libertinism and Skepticism. Such is the faith of not a few theologians, who, while they comment on their Thomas in the Schools, and report the conflicting opinions of their predecessors, finally end in “it is not clear,” or, “it is most probable.” 4. Or, for a rigid but ignorant and implicit faith in the Roman formula: such as is that of the ignorant clergy and laity. 5. Or, for an explicit faith in the Roman formula according to the Council of Trent and the current and rigid Doctors, who contentiously and against their conscience (as is too much to be feared) defend every single corruption and deformation of their Roman Mother, namely, in contempt of the heretics, as they think them to be. Such is the faith of Baronius, Coster, Cornelius à Lapide, Gretser, Busaeus, Sandæus, Serrarius, Becanus, Cotton, etc., and of those who follow such masters.

II. The Roman Church, or Papist Church, can be taken: 1. Either for the particular Church within the walls of the city of Rome. 2. Or for the virtual representative Church: which consists in a single man, namely the Roman Pope. 3. Or for the consistorial representative Church, composed of the Pope and Cardinals. 4. Or for the representative Church of the whole clergy, or if you prefer, of the whole Roman-Papal Hierarchy. 5. Or for the representative Church in a universal Council of the Papacy. 6. Or for the Christian people together with the representative Church of the Clergy or Hierarchy, in or out of a Council. 7. Or for the Christian people in the Western parts, as distinct from the Hierarchy, yet more or less subject to the Papal Hierarchy and the Roman See in ecclesiastical matters, whether willingly or unwillingly, whether spontaneously or reluctantly, whether knowingly or ignorantly. 8. Or for the Papacy, or Papism, that is, for a certain compound of that Christian people, inasmuch as it has coalesced into such and such an ecclesiastical body; and of the Papal and Antichristian order, form, and polity inherent in that ecclesiastical people, informing and deforming it. 9. Or finally for the Papacy itself, precisely and formally, as distinct from the body and species of that people or Christian Church, which is formally Antichristianism and Apostasy: just as (disorder) is distinguished from the order in which it inheres, lameness from the foot and from walking, squinting from the eye and from vision, gangrene from the human body, shortness of breath from vital respiration, tyranny from the people and the Republic subject to tyranny, the dominant Pharisaism and Sadduceeism from the Jewish Church.

III. Communion with any church is: 1. Either explicit or implicit; or formal and virtual. Thus there were in the Papacy not a few, and still are, who have a great part of their communion with the reformed Churches, a virtual and implicit one, that is, though not a formal and explicit one. Some of whom perhaps hardly know whether or where there is a Church openly professing and exercising the faith which they themselves hold in their conscience. Others

perhaps know in general that there is a Church dissenting from the Roman somewhere, but they do not know it historically, or at least do not believe with a certain assent that it is of that faith: just as Luther at the beginning of the Reformation condemned the Bohemian Hussites as heretics, and detested their communion; and this from mere ignorance of the fact, because he was then ignorant of the history and the fact of their religion. 2. Explicit and formal communion can in turn be divided into latent or clandestine, exercised through certain clandestine acts; and manifest, when the Church is public or private-public.

IV. Saving and salvation can be attributed to faith in different ways: 1. Either that one is saved by that faith as a cause, or instrument, or way, or condition without which it is not. 2. Or that one is saved with that faith, although deficient and erroneous: God conniving at it, as a sin of common connivance and tolerance, such as polygamy and the bill of divorce once were. So that salvation is through the remitting mercy of God for Christ's sake as the first cause; and through repentance subordinated to the divine mercy; but only a general, virtual, and implicit repentance from errors, according to the practice of Psalm 19, verse 13. 3. Or that one is saved notwithstanding those errors, or erroneous faith, whenever and if one repents of the errors after the fact, and indeed with an explicit and particular repentance. In which way Peter's lapse is said to have been salutary to him (by accident, that is) by Augustine in book 14 of the City of God, chapter 13, and Adam's lapse a "happy fault" by Gregory the Great. Compare in the first part of the Disputations, the Disputation on the Method of responding to the calumnies about God being the author of sin. And thus 'by' or 'in' does not denote a cause, or a means, or a way of salvation, but an adjunct, or a circumstance, or, properly speaking, a connection, or concomitant. In which way they are said to be saved "by fire" in 1 Corinthians 3, and the Israelites in the waters or through the waters of the Red Sea, and the companions of Daniel in the fire or through the fire, and Noah through water in 1 Peter 3, verse 20, and the earth in the midst of the waters, etc. in 2 Peter 3, verse 5, where see the notes of Beza.

V. The present day, concerning the Roman faith and communion, can be spoken of: 1. Either according to the whole extent of the time of the Reformation up to this day. 2. Or restricted to the time after the Council of Trent: when the deformation was most firmly established, and all reformation was made desperate.

With these preliminary considerations, we come to the determination of the question. The Papists assert that salvation is through their religion alone and in the communion of the Roman Church or the Papacy alone. To which exclusive proposition this negative one follows: No salvation, or no one is saved or can be saved outside the Papal religion and communion. To which assertions these two of ours ought to be opposed: one, Someone is saved or can be saved outside the Roman religion and communion. The other, No one in the Roman communion is saved or can be saved through that religion and communion.

We do not need to labor so much on our former assertion among many, if not most, of the Laity, and even some of the Clergy in the Papacy. But we must deal primarily with the latter, if for no other reason than that not a few of our own simple people, because they do not distinguish well, are not accustomed to answer this question with sufficient confidence, accuracy, and conformity to their own religion; and hence, as I think, the Papists have taken the opportunity to assert and boast of our consent or at least our fear, as we indicate below in Thesis.

We therefore explain the common opinion of our writers in these conclusions:

I. Conclusion. No one can be saved outside the communion of the true faith, and consequently outside the communion of the Christian and Catholic Church.

II. Conclusion. Just as we deny that those who profess the Christian faith outside the communion of the Roman Church are damned, against the false and rash assertion of the Papists: so we do not absolutely deny salvation to all Christians living outside the external communion of the reformed Church.

III. Conclusion. Therefore, the reformed do not deny that someone can have a grain of true saving faith and of true and saving repentance, and consequently can be saved, although he is constituted outside the explicit and external communion of the reformed Church, cultivates the communion of no other Christian Church and profession, or even, having been born and educated in an erroneous Church, indeed in the communion of the Papal Church itself, remains in the same until the end of his life.

The reasons for this their judgment, diametrically opposed to the rash and tyrannical judgment of the Papists, are these.

First, because we cannot know and determine the **minimum quod sic** (the least which is such) (to speak with the Physicists), or the positive terms and degrees of the least internal grace, with which and through which a person can internally cohere with his God in this life, and without which he precisely cannot cohere and be united. Nor can we so easily define and determine how great a measure of external and general faith and of external means the internal grain of true special and justifying faith necessarily requires and presupposes: that is, what is the least degree of saving knowledge and of general faith, and therefore of external profession and use of the external means of salvation, with which the form of true faith and saving repentance must inwardly subsist, and without which it absolutely cannot subsist in the heart, or be demonstrated and judged a posteriori to be true faith and repentance. As in physics the maximum and minimum **quod non** (which is not) of the quantity of natural bodies can be more easily defined; but the minimum **quod sic** (which is such) and the maximum **quod sic** (which is such) not so: so in spiritual matters we cannot know with how thin a thread (as I remember Plessis somewhere says in his treatise on the Church) a person coheres with the grace of God and with his God. And as the degrees of elementary qualities in single individual parts or particles cannot be so specifically and positively determined, designated, and shown, with which the form of the element consists: so much less can a pronouncement be made in the spiritual state of individual persons about the least degrees. See John 3:8.

Secondly, because we do not maintain that explicit and external communion with a true instituted and visible Church, whether particular, or national, or ecumenical, is necessary with the necessity of a means: since sometimes in some case (e.g., of captivity, or of servitude among infidels) it is not necessary with the necessity of a precept; but the reality of true faith and salvation can consist with only a virtual or implicit communion.

Thirdly, because we maintain no necessity of a means or *opus operatum* for the sacraments, which are received in the external communion of the Church, nor do we precisely bind the grace of justification and sanctification to them.

Fourthly, because it can happen that some of the simpler sort are or remain in Arianism, Donatism, Popery, Anabaptism, that is, in the external communion of those assemblies and under the title of those professions or religions, who nevertheless are not of Arianism, or Donatism, or Popery, or Anabaptism. Because the preparatory dispositions to those heresies and corruptions, as they are considered in their form and system essentially and integrally in the abstract, are not admitted, received, and applied to themselves equally perfectly or equally extensively and intensively by all who are in such assemblies and under the title and denomination of those sects or heresies, who profess and practice Christianity: so that the form of that heresy or apostasy is necessarily introduced into all who are externally subjects and partners of that sect or denomination. Just as in natural things not everything that is heated or illuminated by fire is converted into fire. For the patient does not so necessarily suffer as the agent acts: and the receptive receives according to the mode of its receptivity, not according to the mode of the impressing agent. And that there is here a varied disposition of the subjects, according to which the form of apostasy from the truth of the general faith is introduced or not introduced, and consequently it is judged that there is or is not present there within the heart the least measure or grain of a good and sanctified conscience, of a saving and true special repentance efficacious for applying to justification and salvation. We maintain that the cause of this exemption and varied disposition, and hence of the resistance in those subjects who, in the midst of corruption and in the assembly of the corrupt, are not formally and absolutely corrupted, is the all-embracing grace and mercy of God, leading and preserving His elect in a wonderful way, and saving them as if by fire (1 Corinthians 3). To this grace certain means are subordinated, which God in His wonderful providence administers. I have indicated some of the more common ones in the Disputations on the State of the Elect before actual conversion, and on Regeneration. Among the special ones in this case, it seems to me that it should be noted in the first place, that God preserves them, lest they remain in that communion against their conscience, or reject the communion of the true and pure Church. So that, by the example of Paul, they sin here in ignorance (1 Timothy 1, verse 17).

We observe, however, that in some of the simpler sort under the Papacy, ignorance of the law is more prevalent, and ignorance of the fact less so. But in others, ignorance of the law, or of the faith, is less prevalent, and ignorance of the fact, or of history, more so: so that in reality they are and ought to be more ours, as to the inner sense and practice of religion in the principal and most fundamental articles and parts: yet they are not ours by external profession and communion, nor do they dare to be, because they are historically ignorant of the faith both of us and of the Papists.

Their ignorance with regard to our religion is either more of a pure negation or negative, or more of a perverse disposition or contrary. The former is twofold: either of those who are materially ignorant that there are other Christians separate from the Roman Church, called reformed; or of those who materially and confusedly know that there are men and Churches separated from the Roman, but are simply ignorant of what their faith is, although perhaps they have perceived in general that they are called un-Catholic, or heretics, or Lutherans, etc. And hence it is that although they may desire something in their own Church, they yet do not seek the communion of ours, nor do they flee to this asylum of truth. The latter is that of those who, although they agree with us materially in many things, yet from the false information of their Doctors conceive of our faith and Church under a foreign and false

image, and therefore abhor it; they would do otherwise if they had seen its genuine face. And this again is twofold: either of those who, through the contrary information and protestation of our writers and through daily conversation with our people, hear far different things or can hear and see them, yet neither dare nor can believe them, being fascinated by the prejudices of their Doctors, so that they think or suspect that such things are said and done by our people feignedly and deceitfully; or of those who are not given to enjoy such information and familiarity with our people.

Historical ignorance or ignorance of fact, with regard to the abominations of the Papacy, in some is of pure negation, in others of a perverse disposition. The former are ignorant of the (chief tenets) of the Papists, or at least of a great part of them; they are ignorant of the pretended mysteries of the ceremonies, and their explanation; and they are bare spectators of them either from custom or from occasion. The latter are not completely ignorant of some or many dogmas, and rites and their mystical significations, as to the "what" and the "why," but by the fallacious and no less impudent excuses and palliations of their Doctors (such as, for example, and (pre-eminently) one finds in the Defense of the Psalter of Bonaventure in Dutch, and in the Defense of the conformities of Francis by Henricus Sedulius) they are brought to this, that they do not pay so much attention to their baseness. And if these arts are not sufficient, there are added, especially among those whom they cannot coerce with fire and sword, feigned or boldly mendacious extenuations of the most serious abuses; as if on their part they were not made so much of, nor had been formerly imposed on the consciences or practice of the subjects of the Papacy as necessary, or at least were not now imposed, or were not to be imposed. Whence it happens that men do not trouble themselves so much about them, thinking that if they are not necessary, they are at least not plainly illicit or not so bad, and consequently, because it cannot be otherwise now, they are to be tolerated: especially if immunity or (indifference) concerning their sense or practice seems to be permitted or promised to them. But if they knew the depths of Satan and of Antichrist, as they are in themselves and in reality, and if they knew and believed our cause, faith, and profession to be historically such as it really is, it would surely be hoped that they would leave the Papacy and come over to us. In the same way, Luther embraced the Bohemians, previously condemned by him, as brothers, as soon as he was better informed about the history or fact of their faith and cause.

Therefore, concerning such ignorant persons, we determine that they can in some way, though with a thin thread, cohere with the grace of God, and that salvation is not absolutely to be denied to them. Concerning the rest who sin in ignorance of the law, whether of pure negation or of a perverse disposition, and who adhere to the external communion of the Roman Church, we can determine analogically and with due distinction between the times after the Reformation and before the Reformation, what we determined concerning the Churches and the faithful in the West, before the Reformation, in "The Desperate Cause of the Papacy," book 3, section two. Now, however, that we are to judge benignly and prudently of those who remain and practice their religion in and under the corrupt state and assembly of any Church, or at least to leave them by a prudent (suspension of judgment) to the judgment of God, is taught us by: I. The judgment concerning the members of the most corrupt Israelite and Judaic Church, who are everywhere called the people of God (Hosea 2, verse 1; 12, verse 8, 9), and their children, the sons of God (Ezekiel 16:20, 21). Compare Isaiah 50, verse 1 with chapter 53, verse 1; 8, verse 18; 1, verse 9; also Romans 11, verse 2, 4. II. By the judgment of antiquity concerning the subjects of the Arian, Donatist, etc.,

Churches, and because they denied that those baptized in the communion of heretics should be rebaptized. This is also the common opinion today of the Pontificals and the Reformed, against the Anabaptists. To this pertains that famous saying of Augustine: "Many wolves are within, many sheep are without." In the midst of the Papacy, there are not lacking those who do not condemn all who live outside their communion in the Greek and Protestant Churches, as I have proven from Cassander and the theologians of Cologne, etc., in *The Desperate Cause of the Papacy*. To these I now add the little book of Franciscus a Sancta Clara, a Minorite, published in the year 1636, in which most of the dogmas of the Reformation are pronounced to be Catholic, and consonant with the Scriptures and antiquity.

These things having been thus determined, it remains for us to cut off and reject the absurdities that could be attached to this opinion of ours through calumny and badly refuted consequences, which will be done in the following conclusions.

First Conclusion: We deny that anyone can be saved in any religion whatsoever. This Libertinism is nothing other than indirect Atheism, as we have noted in the *Dissertation on Atheism*.

Second Conclusion: We deny that anyone can with a good conscience remain in the communion of the Papal Church; but on the contrary, we contend that all must secede from it. Concerning which, see *The Desperate Cause of the Papacy*, book 3, section 3, and in the *Disputation on Syncretism*. Nor does our determination, just now set forth, concerning the possible, or not impossible, salvation of certain people in the midst of the Papacy, stand in the way. We do not call drafts of poison salutary, nor do we recommend them to anyone, although perhaps someone at some time, by the benefit of a peculiar constitution, or by the intervention of some rarer case, may be said to have overcome the forces of the ingested poison, but with the greatest difficulty and (so to speak) through a thousand deaths. We do not approve of a fire, nor do we remain in a burning house, even though we may hear that someone, by a rare stroke of luck, half-burned, has at last snatched himself from it and saved his life. See 1 Corinthians 3.

Third Conclusion: We deny that Papalism, or the faith of the Papists according to the Roman formula and the prescription of the Council of Trent, considered abstractly and in itself, is salutary (that is, that it is meritorious of salvation, or a cause, or a means, or a *sine qua non* condition, or the way through which it is obtained); but on the contrary, we say that it is damnable. For considered formally, it is composed of mere errors, heresies, idolatry, and superstitions. But these are not the way of salvation, but of damnation. 1 Corinthians 6:10; Galatians 5:20-21.

Fourth Conclusion: We deny that Papism, or the Papal religion—inasmuch as it combines certain Christian truths about the one and triune God, about the person and satisfaction of Christ, about the resurrection of the dead, etc., monstrously mixed and compounded with Papality or Antichristianism, that is, with heresies, idolatry, etc.—is a cause, or a means, or a way of salvation: no more than poisoned wine is a healthy food or medicine; although the wine is really distinguished from the poison, nor is the one the other, and the wine, if it could be separated from the infused poison, could be drunk with altogether salutary effect. For just as poison, as long as it is mixed with wine, corrupts it and renders it lethal, so Papality and

any other damnable heresies, mixed and added to the truths of the faith, prevent them from being salutary to those who profess them.

Fifth Conclusion: We deny that a Papist, who through ignorance of the law [of God] and indeed due to a depraved predisposition, admits and holds completely (according to the prescription of the Council of Trent) the Roman formula or Papal heresies and according to it exercises the practice of religion in the communion of the Roman Church, can be saved without repentance

We, however, think that this assertion must be proposed cautiously and accurately under that limitation. An assertion proposed more generally and consequentially (and not distinctly enough against modern syncretists) was put forward by Gabriel Powell in Book 2, On the Antichrist, Chapter 36: "That out of all those who have died in the communion of the Papal Church, or are still dying, no one has ever been saved, or can be saved." I know the meaning of this most learned man to be sound, and the assertion to be solidly proven by him: but to prevent the cavils that could be seized upon in the word "communion," it is safest to express our mind more distinctly and explicitly.

However, two things are rightly inquired into here. The first is, whether a special and explicit repentance, which is made through an express accusation and condemnation of one's errors and idolatry in kind and in the particular instance, for example, that one has trusted in masses, indulgences, one's own merits and satisfactions, that one has religiously adored images, the cross, the saints, the eucharist, etc., and indeed before God in the inner conscience and before men (where it may be necessary and possible) by an external profession, is required here by necessity of precept and of means; or whether only a general and implicit repentance, according to the tenor of Psalm 19, verse 13, is sufficient. Such that in general one grieves for all sins committed by oneself, whether one knows them or not, whether one remembers them or not, and does not in particular accuse oneself for them or condemn those sins in one's conscience with distinct and express thoughts mutually accusing, and then absolving oneself on account of Christ's merit applied by faith. The latter is, whether one who has theoretically and practically adhered to the whole of Popery throughout his entire life, given that he does not condemn it entirely and in its principal parts in himself by an explicit judgment before God, and also before men (if it be possible), and does not detest it with salutary grief, but only performs a general and implicit repentance before death, is this at least required for salvation by necessity of precept and of means: that by that very act he dismisses and breaks away from the heretical and idolatrous things according to the Roman formula and from the exercise of interior faith and repentance, and on the contrary dies in the true invocation of the one God through Christ the sole Mediator, and in the practice of true faith and repentance. Response: To both questions concerning the necessity of precept, yes. To the latter also concerning the necessity of means, yes. Concerning the former, we do not determine at this time. We confess, however, that we incline to the affirmative, as regards the principal doctrines (kyrias doxas) or the capital theses enumerated there under each heading, or at least as regards the general hypothesis, concerning the insufficiency of saving grace and the merits of Christ; the dogmas concerning one's own satisfactions, indulgences, one's own merits, justification by works, as well as the dogma and practice of the mass, and the invocation of Angels and Saints with their appendages of images, relics, and consecrated things are based on this.

CONCERNING THE FAITH OF THE PAPISTS,

VI. Conclusion. We deny that ignorance of pure negation, whether it be of law or of fact, through which it happens that today very many of the more simple people remain in the communion of the Roman Church, is without fault. But on the contrary, we assert that all such ignorance is in itself damnable and culpable, and must necessarily be lamented and amended either by an explicit and special, or a general and implicit repentance. Ignorance of the law as to the thematic, fundamental, and necessary points of the true faith necessarily requires an explicit and special repentance and emendation. For without knowledge, no one is saved. 1 Thessalonians 4:5; 1 Corinthians 15:34, compared with 2 Thessalonians 1, verse 8. We do not dare to say that ignorance of fact, or of the history of the errors of the Roman Church and of the truths of the reformed Church, always requires an explicit and special repentance to be performed before death. We confess, nevertheless, that one is more or less culpable than the other, according as it is affected or unaffected, more affected or less affected. For one must judge differently of the simpler Papists who in the fields of Spain have perhaps not heard by report about the reformed Religion and Church, and do not know whether there is in the nature of things another Christianity, another Church, than the one they see there: and one must judge differently of those who in the federated Belgium obstinately adhere to the Roman Church, blaspheme the reformation, and pursue the reformed Church with Vatinian and internecine hatred. Is it not rightly to be doubted and feared that among them (especially among the Nobles, Patricians, and the Literate, for whom leisure, means, and occasions to know the truth historically are not lacking) there are those who partly affect an ignorance of pure negation here, partly deceive themselves by an ignorance of a depraved disposition, and indeed that not a few know things here to be otherwise, and yet are carried away against their conscience by worldly considerations, a disease of the mind, and prejudice? God is not mocked. See Mark 6:11. I would dare to suggest to not a few of them, in whose deep mind is stored "the judgment of Paris, and the insult to her slighted beauty" (which could easily have happened through the tumults of wars and political factions and changes, and yet is not to be imputed to an innocent religion), that word of Peter to Simon Magus in Acts 8: "For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity."

VII. Conclusion. As for the Papist theologians, who defend everything without exception for the sake of their Roman mother (such as, for example, Baronius, Bellarmine, Gretser, Valentia, Costerus, A Lapide, Serrarius, Sandæus, Cotton, Perron), with respect to the History of facts or the question in a state of denial, concerning the Reformed and Roman Faith through an ignorance of a depraved disposition.

We believe that they have not only attacked the feigned position, but have moreover, against knowledge and conscience, deceitfully encrusted and excused all things Roman, while slanderously and hatefully perverting the reformed things. Which horrendous sins, unless they have deplored and amended them with serious repentance before God, I do not see what hope can be had for their salvation. See Matthew 23 throughout. 1 Thessalonians 2:15-16. However, it could be questioned here whether an explicit and peremptory condemnation and detestation of one's error and deed before God is required in such a case; or whether a doubt, or a conditioned condemnation (namely, with this formula: "if it should have happened that I sinned and erred in that, and did not render a pleasing duty to you, as indeed I believed") could suffice? Response: I would not dare to affirm the latter. Although I have heard from

trustworthy sources that there are clerics of no low rank who are kept in that communion for the sake of blessing themselves and especially their family with honors and wealth, who abstain from a serious inquiry into this cause according to knowledge, lest at their own peril they be forced to move an evil that is well-established: with this hope that God will forgive them, if before the end of their life they confess their guilt hypothetically with this or a similar formula: "Lord, if I did not have the right opinion, or if I strayed from the right way, you forgive me."

There are also other clerics, namely common parish priests, priests, and canons, who soothe their conscience with this narcotic plaster: that for them, however much they may think better in some things, the roles of actors and judges in the affairs and causes of the Church do not belong, or at least are not left to them, but only to bishops and other ecclesiastical governors, upon whom they devolve these burdens, since they alone are to render an account of these things to God. In short, the laity securely pass this case of conscience to the parish priests and priests, these to the bishops, the bishops to the ideal Church or to the Pope.

8. Conclusion: Concerning the salvation of Popes, Cardinals, Satrap-Bishops, and other regal priests, who are not theologians, nor properly handle theological and ecclesiastical matters, but in the meantime persecute or impede the reformation, the same is to be determined as concerning those in Philippians 3, verses 18-19, and concerning Caiaphas, Annas, and similar Jewish Pontiffs: unless they seriously repent.

9. Conclusion: Concerning Emperors, Kings, Princes, who in the communion of the Roman Church have persecuted the reformation with both deceit and violence and tyranny (such as, for example, Charles V, Philip II, etc.), it could be questioned whether they could have been saved through a general and implicit repentance; or whether a special and explicit repentance (such as that of Paul in 1 Timothy 1) was necessarily required as a means. However, it must be considered distinctly whether they labored concerning the Papist and reformed faith in an ignorance of pure negation; or moreover of a depraved disposition, and how great; or rather against knowledge and conscience for worldly considerations, they defended the Antichrist or the Roman see and its corruptions, by right or wrong, and persecuted the reformation. If the third hypothesis is granted, I do not fear to say that an explicit and special repentance and amendment were necessary. For I do not see how a drop of true faith and repentance could coexist with perseverance in such and so great hypocrisy and wickedness. But if the second hypothesis is granted, it could be questioned again, whether an asserted and peremptory condemnation of one's error concerning the question of fact, and, according to that error, of one's evil practice and execution, was required in conscience before God; or whether a mere doubt (namely with this formula: "If it should have happened that I erred and sinned in that, and did not render the due duty to you, as I believed," or "cleanse me from my secret faults," etc.) could have sufficed.

From all things thus determined in the affirmative (by thesis) and in the negative (by arsis), we elicit these corollaries.

1. Corollary: That the testimony of their adversaries (namely, the reformed) for the saving truth of their own faith is falsely and unjustly boasted of from time to time by the Papists. To pass over for now Bellarmine's thirteenth mark of the Church, and the book of William Breda, an Englishman (which also exists in Latin), professedly attempting to prove this, and

writers of a similar stamp, they are accustomed to bring forward a little story and fable to prove this great matter, concerning Henry IV, King of the Gauls, who, they say, after he had defected from the reformed Church or was preparing his defection, asked a reformed preacher and a Pontifical theologian whether one could be saved in the communion of the faith and Church of the reformed and of the Roman; and when the Pontifical one denied it of the reformed, but the reformed one did not deny it of the Pontifical, but rather affirmed it with distinction, the King is said to have responded to the reformed preacher: "since your faith has only your own testimony, but the Pontifical has that of both parties, or of both of you, it will be most advisable to embrace the Pontifical communion." Whatever may be the case with that little story or fable, and with the judgment of the King, we, with all the reformed, deny our testimony to the Papacy, as we have already declared sufficiently. On the contrary, we undertake to defend that our religion, as to its fundamentals, has the testimony of many in the Papacy, as I have proved in the Disputation *On the Force of Truth Erupting in the Papacy*; indeed, even of the whole Papacy as to most fundamental and thetical truths. But the additions and novelties of the Papacy have the testimony of no one except the Papists, and not even of all of them: which is plain to see, if individual points are considered separately and one looks through the books of theologians, both Scholastic and more recent. We have given a specimen and shown the method in the article on salvation through Christ, against human merits.

2. Corollary: That it is falsely and unskillfully said by certain new Neutrals or Syncretists as cited elsewhere in Richard Montagu and others. That in the Roman Church the foundation of the Christian and Catholic faith is so retained, that its errors are not fundamental.

Those who labor so perfunctorily around those rough patches do not see that the following points must first be accurately determined:

1. Whether all and every fundamental dogma is openly and entirely proposed and held in the common doctrine and profession of the Papacy, without doubt and hesitation; and whether none of them, not even one, is abolished there, either directly or indirectly, that is, by a solid and immediate consequence.
2. Whether at least most fundamental dogmas are proposed and held there in the manner that has been stated.
3. Whether at a minimum some fundamental dogmas are retained there, in the way now stated, for example, concerning the one God, the Trinity, Christ the God-man (θεανθρώπου) and His satisfaction, the resurrection of the dead, eternal life and death, etc.
4. And if it is granted that such things are retained there (as it is indubitable they are retained materially), whether they are and remain formally, for them and those men, truths of faith, and indeed fundamental ones: in what way can it be asked whether Plato and Seneca, or any other Gentile philosopher, formally held and had these fundamental truths of our faith, for example, concerning the one God, Providence, etc., and consequently whether those foundations were sufficient for their salvation: or whether they were so overwhelmed and absorbed by their whole and formal Gentilism that, with respect to salvific communion with God and eternal salvation, it could be said that their light was turned into darkness, no less than their virtues (according to the opinion of Augustine) became splendid sins. Thus it is asked by Gabriel in his *Exposition of the Canon of the Mass*, whether that water which is poured into the wine of the Eucharist remains water and is thus immediately

transubstantiated, or whether it is first changed into wine, and then no longer remains and can be called water.

5. Given that some fundamental truths are retained there by some, both materially and formally, as from divine revelation; yet in the remaining and more numerous points, fundamental errors are admitted by the prescription of the Papacy, whether Christianity and Catholicism should rather be attributed to those men abstractly and objectively, or at least subjectively, or Papism, and whether he himself should be called a Christian and a Catholic, rather than a Papist: since the final act specifies, and every mixture and temperament is named from the predominating element and quality.

But concerning these things, our dissertation **On Syncretism** and on the fundamental articles and errors should be consulted.

CONCERNING THE FAITH OF THE PAPISTS,

III. Consequence. It is wrongly denied by the same people that the errors of the Roman Church are damnable in effect. For they distinguish between that which is damnable by merit and that which is damnable in effect: they affirm the former concerning those errors, but deny the latter: for although an error may be damnable in itself, it does not, however, condemn or take away salvation, but is remitted by God, even if someone dies in it with general repentance. Thus Christopher Potter in his English writing published in the year 1634, titled *Charity Mistaken, justly censured etc.* And his champion William Chillingworth in his book titled *The Religion of Protestants a Safe Way to Salvation*, pages 15, 16.

But with this distinction crudely admitted, how will one prove that any heresy, however horrid, effectively condemns? Could not the same plaster of a distinction be applied to the denial of the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15 and of justification by works in Galatians 5:4?

He builds upon these hypotheses for this opinion. The first of which is, That the Roman Church was, with others, a part of the Catholic Church, but a very defective and corrupt one: in such a way, however, that it retained the fundamentals. But these things are too convoluted. It was necessary to know distinctly beforehand: What is denoted by the term Roman Church? A chaos of good and evil, both of men and of dogmas? Or the better part of the few, who lie hidden under the Papacy, although they are not of the Papacy, nor about the Papacy? Or indeed the worse part, and the faction of the malignant, which is usually designated by the name of Clergy, Hierarchy, and representative Church? Whether they ought to be preserved by the fundamentals as such, or indeed by the errors as such, or finally by both conjoined? And if only by the fundamentals; it is now asked whether those things, infected and impeded by errors, not unlike a broken leg by its fracture, can perform the function of fundamentals and lead to salvation, as long as they are not freed from the adhering errors, as from lethal impediments and corruptions. Once these and other things are known beforehand, one must finally come to a distinct determination: otherwise, general assertions are formed rashly or deceitfully.

The second hypothesis is in the said author's cited book, part 1, chapter 4: That the Articles of the Creed contain all fundamentals. But this is as easily rejected as it is asserted by them. Indeed, if they were to explain themselves, they themselves would not believe it. Concerning this, see what we have said in our Disputation **On the Apostles' Creed**.

