

Francis Turretin

On the Spirit, Water, and Blood

Witnessing on Earth

From 1 John 5:8

I. Not so long ago we started a discussion about the number of witnesses that John brings to the fore for the demonstration of Gospel truth about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Redeemer. And so far we have seen what pertains to the knowledge of the heavenly witnesses both as to their Nature, as to their Office, and as to their Unity, which three are mentioned by John. It follows that we deal with the witnesses who testify on earth, and consider, using the same order and method, what nature they are, what their office is, and how they are joined to each other by consent.

II. The words of John in verse 8, chapter 5, "And there are three that bear witness on earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one." In which the copulative particle καὶ [and] which occurs at the beginning of this verse shows that these [witnesses]

depend on the preceding ones; and if no other reason were available it would be sufficient to demonstrate that the seventh verse about the heavenly witnesses is not a counterfeit and supposition, as the Socinians accuse, but is true and genuine, otherwise there would be a gap in John's discourse [i.e., no verse 7], and he would not have mentioned the earthly witnesses in a sufficiently appropriate manner unless he had previously spoken of the heavenly ones, as the couplet connecting both verses reveals. But this conjunction itself seems to insinuate something else, the most secret, that is, the wonderful and harmonious union of heaven and earth in the testimony of Christ. For Christ, by His mediation, reconciled the earth to heaven, which formerly, through the sin of man, were hostile to one another. Thus, heaven and earth now come together in friendly agreement to confirm the truth of this in our hearts: Heaven answers to earth and earth answers to heaven.

III. From this it is clear these two sets of witnesses were proposed by John not without serious reasons. For although the heavenly witnesses were greater without exception, the Holy Spirit wanted to take into account

our weakness. Indeed, when seen in their glorious majesty, it could narrow our eyes in such a way that we may be less inclined to receive their testimony. That is why he wanted to add others who could more easily insinuate themselves into our hearts and lead us to the truth of the matter, being closer and able to connect us. Then, when giving testimony, the number of witnesses should be considered, so that every word is established by the mouth of two or three witnesses. It was agreed on both sides to produce three witnesses who would confirm this mystery even more strongly. Again, since in every testimony the authority of witnesses, or the evidence of the thing itself, is generally looked upon, it was decided to combine both so that nothing could be lacking in this divine testimony; for the testimony of the first three is as great an authority as it can be, for example, according to the Divine Nature, which by itself is self-authenticating. And the latter is so evident in the hearts of the faithful, and in the innermost sense of conscience, that nothing can be clearer for the exercise of faith. Finally, as the prophet Haggai had long ago foretold that heaven and earth would be shaken at the

coming of Christ, chapter 2, so that Christ willed that every witness should be given to him, that there should be no room left for any doubt, so that whether we cast our eyes on heaven or on earth, we should everywhere detect clear and expressed evidences of this truth, so that there can be no excuse for those who reject Christ, who has proved Himself by sufficiently firm and clear testimonies to be the One who had once been promised.

IV. In order, therefore, to come down to the examination of these testimonies, we need not anxiously inquire why the number three is listed; why John chose the number composed of three, rather than two or four. For although it seems almost superfluous to seek the reason for this, the decision in which we can safely rest depends on the Holy Spirit alone. In fact, this number seems to have been chosen by the Apostle over the others, not only because a certain perfection is commonly designated by this number; but above all, because it corresponds to the triple number of heavenly witnesses, and because it is most agreeable both to those who are the subjects of the passages, as well as to the truth which is proposed to be tested, as we have already explained above.

V. But because there is a wonderful diversity of opinions in explaining these witnesses, in order that we may easily discover more information, we will first remove those which seem to be little consistent with the truth. Then, by default, we will open and confirm the [last] one to test before the rest of us. Some assert that three heavenly witnesses were brought by John to confirm the Deity of Christ, but now as many witnesses of that humanity are brought, namely, the human Spirit whom Christ dying gave into the hands of the Father, Luke 23:46, and the Water and Blood which flowed from the side of the dead as a certain argument of the human nature of Christ. True, if we consider John's goal, it will be clear that it is none other than to prove that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our Redeemer; whence the demonstration of humanity that is proposed seems completely superfluous: Even more so since there was no controversy about it, for the adversaries acknowledged that Christ was the truth according to man, and those who had seen His life and death could not doubt this, but they only denied that He was the Son of God and the

true Messiah, which was to be proved against them, not the truth which was in the εἰσαγωγικὸν confession.

VI. Others want the three witnesses to designate the three kinds of oracles of Christ, which Jesus, while He was still on earth, showed Himself complete, to denote the Water by the Gospel, His death by the Blood, and the Spirit, the power of the Spirit and miracles. Indeed, according to the Old Testament oracles Christ came first, as a prophet through water; that is, through the teaching of the Gospel, which is not infrequently imparted by water, Isa. 11:9, and Ezek. 36 [v. 25], which Christ brought and spread throughout the world. Secondly, as a priest through the blood by which He sacrificed for us. Thirdly, as a King by the Spirit performing such miracles by which He delivered His people and triumphed over His enemies, which are also expressed by the name of the Spirit, 1 Tim. 3:16, 1 Peter 3:18. But this explanation cannot be admitted absolutely, for, apart from the fact that the Gospel is less often denoted by water, whatever is referred to here belongs rather to the heavenly testimony of the Word and the Spirit, which was said in

the preceding verse, rather than this which refers to the earthly testimony.

VII. Some want to understand by Water and Blood legal ablutions or expiatory sacrifices by which God testified in the Old Testament that Christ would come with water and blood, that is, to atone and cleanse our sins. To this testimony taken from the Old Testament is added another, which is the New Testament, of course, the Gospel, which is called the Spirit. True, although there may be a place for this opinion, as we shall see later, it does not seem that John intended it directly, because he does not deal with the past in which Christ was depicted under various figures, but with the present in which He is said to have come by water and blood. Others understand by water the testimony of John the Baptist who testified by water that Jesus is the Lamb of God, by blood through the testimony of the Centurion who saw blood and water flow from the side of Christ, and by the Spirit the testimony of the Apostles who spoke in different languages on the day of Pentecost. But these things are more alien to John's mind than they are acceptable.

VIII. There are those who approach the truth of the matter more correctly through the Spirit's gifts, both extraordinary and ordinary, through the Water of life, the purity and innocence, through the Blood of the Apostles and the faithful for Christ, who insinuate that this is why it is called martyrdom [i.e., martyr = witness]. However, the more common opinion is that of those who understand by the Spirit the Gospel, by Water and Blood the two ordinary New Testament Sacraments: Baptism and the Supper. But also, by the thing signified because as the Gospel testifies that Jesus is the Son of God, John 20:31, the Sacraments as Gospel seals are similarly perpetual witnesses to us on earth. It is not easy to gather the sentiment of these various opinions, but we are willing to admit the truth that none of them seems to fully satisfy everyone, for they are either alien to John's purpose or too narrow to fully and accurately explain the matter in question.

IX. So that we may open our minds without being judged negatively by the learned, we think these are not so opposed to each other that they cannot be easily reconciled if most of these opinions are not considered

separately, but together. For such is the power of Holy Scripture that it contains more things than words, and often designates under one and the same term various mysteries subordinate to each other. It should not seem surprising if the various σχέσεις [relationships] in its explanation come to be joined from time to time so that the meaning intended by the Holy Spirit may be considered overall. Hence, since this testimony can be viewed under a double relationship, either as it is presented externally in the Church for the conviction of men or as it is sealed internally in the heart for the consolation of the faithful, in accordance with this twofold respect, we consider that these three witnesses can also be viewed as either externally or internally testifying.

Thus, by Spirit we think that the Holy Spirit is designated as an effective force both extrinsically manifesting itself in the Word and intrinsically working in the heart. By Water is the sacrament of baptism which is administered in the Church under the symbol of water, and the same truth is obtained in the heart through the benefit of regeneration. By blood is the sacrament of the Eucharist,

which is the communion of the blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 10:16, and the benefit of justification or remission of sins by the Blood of Christ which is sealed in this Sacrament. And thus, six parts of this testimony may be noted, not which differ from the whole, but which correspond to and are subordinate to each other. For the external are the symbols of the internal, and the internal is the truth and the thing signified which is represented by the external.

X. It will be clear from a special examination of these witnesses, whether they are considered jointly or separately, that these things are not unsuitably distributed in this way. For if they are looked at together, a wonderful relationship is detected regarding various mysteries: (1) to the persons of the Holy Trinity, (2) to the offices of Christ, (3) to the remedies of sin, (4) to the means of salvation, (5) finally, to the figures of the Old Testament.

And first to the Divine Persons, for he had introduced those three witnesses directly in heaven. Thus, it was consistent and threefold that the testimony of Christ on earth given by Spirit, Water and Blood would correspond

to the triple heavenly testimony and would be appropriated to each Person in so far as they come together through special operations to confirm our faith. Hence, the Grace which is attributed to the Father through Water will be designated the Redemption which is proper to the Son through the Blood and the illumination and conversion which depends on the Holy Spirit through the Spirit. Or, as others interpret, the Spirit refers to the Father who calls us to Himself through the Gospel; the Blood refers to the Son who justifies us through His blood; And Water refers to the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us through water. Augustine, book 3, *Against Maximinus*, chap. 22, "If, indeed, the things which were signified by these," of course, the Spirit, Water and Blood of which he spoke, "we wish to inquire whether the Trinity itself, which is the one true supreme God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, does not absurdly occur. Of whom it might most truly be said there are three witnesses, and three are one, so that we may take what is signified by the name of Spirit, God the Father, since the Lord spoke of him in adoration, where he says that the Spirit is God; and by the name of Blood,

the Son, because the Word was made flesh; and in the name of Water, the Holy Spirit, for when Jesus was speaking of the water which he was going to give to those who were thirsty, the Evangelist said, "But this he said of the Spirit which the believers were to receive."

XI. (2) The three offices of Christ are not obscurely designated by this triple testimony, the Prophet in the Spirit under whose impulse He ought to have spoken as the other Prophets, 2 Peter 1:21, in this way Christ the Prince of Prophets taught, 1 Peter 3:18-19, whence the Spirit is called the Teacher of Truth, John 16; The sacerdotal blood which Christ as Priest and Victim had to shed for us for the expiation of sins, Heb. 1:3; The water [symbolizes] His royal power that regenerates us, giving us life and salvation itself, John 3:5. Thus, the Spirit gives the light of doctrine, the Blood the price of death, the Water the efficacy of life.

XII. (3) These three witnesses supply us with a threefold remedy by taking care of the threefold evil brought on by the sin of Ignorance, of course, and of Corruption and Guilt. For ignorance is removed by the light of faith which the Spirit kindles in us through the Word of the Gospel.

Corruption is healed by sanctity, which the external water of baptism seals, and the spiritual and mystical water of grace works within; Guilt through the sprinkling of Christ's blood always speaks better than the blood of Abel, whose symbol is set forth in the Eucharist, and the truth is set forth in the heart through the internal ραντισμόν [sprinkling] of faith by which the remission of sins is intimated and completed for us. Spirit illuminates, Water purifies, Blood redeems. This is what Ambrose wanted, book 3, *On the Spirit*, chap. 21, "There are three witnesses: the Spirit, Water and Blood, and these three are one in Christ Jesus. Hear how the witness of the Spirit renews the mind; the water benefits as does a bath, the blood considers the price. For the Spirit made us sons of God by adoption; the stream of the holy fountain washed us; the blood of the Lord redeemed us. Therefore, the invisible gives the visible testimony to our spirit," etc.

XIII. (4) The means of salvation are also contained here since three things are chiefly required for salvation that we may become its partakers: Revelation, Acquisition, and Application. These three things we find in these three witnesses: The Spirit reveals it in the Gospel, Blood

acquires it on the cross, and Water applies it to the heart. Again, considering the means by which God calls us to the communion of salvation, either they are external or internal, and the three things meet in each case: the external word, namely, with the two sacraments of Baptism and the holy Supper, and the internal Calling of Justification and Sanctification, or faith, hope, and charity. Both have their place here. For the Spirit designates the word Gospel and the faith which is the result of an effective calling; The benefit of the water of regeneration is well connected with the Sacrament of Baptism, which is therefore called the washing of regeneration, Titus 3:5; and the blood includes the justification and remission of sins sealed for us in the Supper with the hope of eternal life. For the blood which is offered to us to drink in the Supper was shed for the remission of sins. Thus, the commemoration of the death of Christ is commanded to be done in hope of eternal life until the Lord comes to complete our salvation. Tertullian seems to have this in mind in his book, *On Baptism*, chap. 16, "Christ came by water and blood so that the water might be dipped, and the blood might be glorified, so

that he might make us called by the water. He sent these two baptisms to the chosen ones with blood from the pierced wound of the side because those who believed in his blood would be washed with water and those who washed themselves with water would also drink blood." In no other way does Bede come to this passage: "He came by water and blood, that is to say, the water of washing and the blood of his passion. Not only did he deign to be baptized because of our ablution, in order to consecrate and deliver the Sacrament of Baptism to us, but he also gave his blood for us, redeeming us with his own passion, by whose sacraments we would always be nourished for salvation," as the *Interlinear Gloss* repeats.

XIV. Finally, a reference also occurs to the figures of the Old Testament. For there were three memorable things above the rest under the law, by which all things pertaining to the ceremonies were accomplished: (1) The Spirit of Prophecy by which the men of God acted to reveal the mysteries of salvation. (2) The water in which all ablutions and ceremonial surveys were performed. (3) The blood of the victims by which sins were expiated. In order not to miss anything in the New Testament, God

wanted to give three things to the faithful, which are far more excellent: (1) The Spirit of the teacher of truth, who was to be poured out not on a few, but indiscriminately on all flesh, by whom the faithful were to prophesy and see visions, Joel 2:28, that is, wide and the clear knowledge of God will be enjoyed, for the mysteries of the Gospel are often expressed in legal terms. (2) The water which in baptism is poured into the holy fountain for us to wash away our filth. (3) The blood, not from αλόγον [irrational] dead of beasts, but living and λογικόν [reasonable] from Him, who, through the eternal Spirit offered Himself blameless to God, Heb. 9:14.

XV. While these witnesses have been taken together, we must deal distinctly with each one and their testimony. The first to appear is the Spirit, who is not here to be understood as ούσιωδως [essential] or υποστατικως [hypostatic] for the Divine Nature or for the person of the Holy Spirit, which had already been previously explained when discussing the number of heavenly witnesses, but energetically and effectively with regard to the gifts, not, indeed, as regards miraculous and extraordinary gifts, for we have previously stated that

the Spirit of heaven testified through these things, but rather as regards the ordinary gifts common to each believer, which are both outwardly manifest in the Word of the Gospel and inwardly hidden in the gift of faith and the grace of enlightenment. For this testimony is designated by the following words in verse 10 which teach, "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself," and verse 11, "And this is the testimony, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life he is in his Son." From which it is clear that this testimony consists partly in the Word of the Gospel, where we are taught that eternal life is promised to us by God and is given in the Son, and partly in the heart which by faith grasps and embraces this truth.

XVI. Nor should it seem new that the voice of the Spirit is unlawfully used in that sense, since this meaning occurs more than once. For regarding the Gospel, it is known that this doctrine of salvation often comes under the name of the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3:6, in contrast to the Law, which is written in the letter which kills, but the Spirit gives life. For by the letter of the Law is to be understood the thing itself and the purpose of the Apostle, not only

because it is written on tablets of stone, but especially because, like the letter, the Law can do nothing else than propose to us our duty without giving any additional power of the Spirit to carry out our duty effectively and operatively. The reason for both depends on the difference between the Legal and the Gospel Covenants, for the Legal that man's obedience was based on is well said to be based on a literal interpretation of the Law because God, indeed, required man's duty by it, but did not go further to soften the heart of man to obedience, whereupon the Law became weak in the flesh, Romans 8:3. But the Evangelical Covenant is best called the Spirit or the service of the Spirit because it depends entirely on grace and does not only command but effectively works in man by inscribing the Law on the tablets of the fleshly heart, quickening it by the power of the Holy Spirit, while bending us to obedience. But let us not go any further than this idea of the Spirit, which John quite clearly confirms in verse 6, "Christ came by water and blood, and it is the Spirit who testifies because the Spirit is truth." For in this way it seems to insinuate that the Holy Spirit speaking in the heart convinces each believer that

the Spirit is the truth; claiming, of course, that the doctrine of the coming of Christ in water and blood proposed in the Word is most true and worthy of unquestionable faith. Hence, it is clear the Gospel is especially designated by the name Spirit because He is the most effective instrument by which He works in hearts.

XVII. But it is no less certain that the Spirit is also very often taken for the internal gifts of the Spirit which are given to the faithful in the Covenant of Grace, especially the Spirit of Adoption and the gift of faith which we are given in an effective calling, whence it is called the "Spirit of faith," 2 Cor. 4:13, and "the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation," Eph. 1:17, which is proposed as a special gift of the New Testament, Joel 2, and John 14:16, because John the Baptist, who himself was the greatest among those born of women, had to have had greater abundance as regards the knowledge of mysteries. Hence Luke 12:12, Christ forbids the disciples to worry about what they were going to say before the Magistrates and Sanhedrin because the Spirit was going to teach them what to say at that time and Paul, 1 Thess.

1:5, he says, "The word of the Gospel was not with them only in speech but in power and the Holy Spirit and in much assurance," etc., because the ears of the body throbbing in vain unless God opened the heart; and the seed was sown in vain unless the Spirit rooted it in the minds.

XVIII. Now this Spirit is clearly witnessing Christ by working both in the Word and in the heart. For with regard to the Gospel, no one is ignorant of the fact that its most important purpose is to bear witness to Christ both as to His person and nature, and as to His offices and benefits, John 20:31, "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name." Whence it is occasionally called the testimony of Christ, 2 Tim. 1:8, "Be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord," and Rev. 1:2, 9, the Word of God and the Testimony of Jesus Christ are conjoined as *ισοδυναμα* [equivalent] because the Word bears witness to Christ and the Apostles are called witnesses who come to testify, John 1:7-8; 19:35 "He who saw the disciples testifies and his testimony is worthy of faith," etc., and

21:24, "This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things: and we know that his testimony is true." But if we look at the Spirit acting in the heart, it is said to be no less a witness, not indeed in the manner of an object, as if it suggests to us some testimony separate from the Word through Enthusiasms and through mysterious inspirations, as the Fanatics would have it, because the Spirit is never to be separated from the Word, Isa. 59:21, but by way of principle because it convinces us of the truth of the Gospel by generating faith in our hearts. Hence, Christ promises the Spirit will testify about Him, John 15:26-27, "It is the Spirit who will testify about me, and you will also testify." And how will He testify? "He will receive of mine and announce it to you," John 16:14, that is, He will impress my teaching on your hearts. Thus, Paul says in Romans 8:16 that the Spirit of God bears witness with our Spirit that we are children of God, because the Spirit of Adoption which is conferred upon us is the surest proof of our sonship, both consequently and later. It confirms our adoption with God, prior and antecedent, because it renews us to the image of God, making us children of

God through regeneration. So Acts 5:31-32, the Spirit is said to testify about Christ, "This Jesus," say the Apostles, "God has exalted to his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and the remission of sins, and we are witnesses of these things, and the Holy Spirit whom God gave to those who obey him."

XIX. From which it is clear this is what John intended when he proposed the Spirit in the first place. Let us now see what is signified by the Water and Blood which are mentioned in the second and third order. We have already hinted at this before, and it can be seen more clearly from the preceding words in verse 6, when he says, "Christ came by water and blood," for it can hardly be doubted that the Apostle looks back to Christ.

Therefore, once we understand what these words of John mean, we will easily understand what he is hinting at by the water and the blood. But what John testifies to in this passage is not agreed upon by all. Some want water to denote Christ's baptism, and His death by blood, because in both clear evidences were given by which it was declared He was the Son of God. But this seems alien to John's words and purpose. Others refer to the water

and blood which flowed from the pierced side of Christ. As much as we do not doubt John considered Christ here, we do not think he intended to stop there, but that he designated some higher mystery here. Therefore, we think it is safer and truer to speak to those who, in this passage, intend to connote the two main benefits of Christ which are sealed in the two New Testament Sacraments: that is, the Expiation of sin and the Justification which takes place in the blood of Christ and the Regeneration which takes place through the Spirit. Of course, sin draws two evils behind it, guilt and stain, and two remedies were also used by Christ to cure both evils: Justification, which would remove the guilt before God by the power of the blood or satisfaction provided by Christ, and Sanctification, which would cleanse the stain and fault in us through the efficacious Spirit who very often comes under the name of water in Scripture. It is well said that Christ came by water and blood because He brought us a double benefit by His coming: Justification in blood and sanctification in water, while He became for us both righteousness and sanctification, 1 Cor. 1:30. He, therefore, came in the blood of

atonement and in the water of purification: In the blood that frees from guilt, in the water that cleanses from filth: In the blood that redeems with the infinite price of justice in the water that sanctifies through the efficacy of grace.

XX. This, however, under the Old Testament had already been outlined very clearly by the two symbols by which most of the ceremonies consisted, and by which the καθαρισμός [purification] of men was completed, namely, Water and Blood. For although there were several species of them, yet under these two the whole system of holiness and justice was contained. Filth was washed away by water so that only pure and clean people could approach God, but in the blood was the pledge of expiation and reconciliation with God. But especially Paul teaches that the Old Covenant was in blood and water, Heb. 9:19, "Moses took the blood of calves and goats with water," for it is possible with Moses in that solemn covenant agreement to which the Apostle regards what is described, Exod. 24:7-8, though there was no express mention of water, yet Paul could have it either from tradition, which the Holy Spirit

sanctified by infusing it into his soul, or he doubtless collated or gathered it from analogy because elsewhere blood was combined with water, as in the treatment of a leper when the blood of a slaughtered bird was mixed with water, Lev. 14:6, 51. Therefore, the Old Covenant was made with blood and water. He also wanted the New, which is the antitype and truth of the Old, to be consecrated with blood and water, so that in Christ alone the truth and the fulfillment of all the legal forms of the Old Covenant itself could be found. And therefore, it is true the Messiah was promised to the Fathers and awaited by the faithful, who has the fullness of grace and power for the salvation of men, and who solidly and truly performed those things which pertained to our Justification and Sanctification, and which were only sketched in external symbols by the absolution and legal expiation.

XXI. And we think that he undoubtedly looked back on that memorable circumstance of Christ's passion in which John reports that blood and water flowed from the pierced side of Christ, John 19:34. For although this should be seen as not entirely unusual and contrary to

the order of nature, when it is established that the membrane adjacent to the atrium or pericardium contains water by which the immense heat of the heart is cooled, which could come out with the blood from the pierced heart. However, this effusion was more like a mystery than natural, and if there had not been something supernatural and miraculous in it, it is hardly credible that the Evangelist wanted to use that triple assertion about the truth of the matter, as he who saw it testifies. For that fluid of the pericardium is not yellow in color, nor with a taste that relates to bitter water. There can be no doubt that this happened in such a way as to prove the death of Christ, for unless this had happened the obstinate Jews would have been able to call into doubt the truth of the resurrection, as if the still half-living man had been taken down from the cross. It is true that after this incident no such opportunity for taunting could survive, since it is certain death necessarily follows a wounded or open pericardium.

XXII. Whoever hears John himself alluding to these words in this Epistle will not be able to doubt the true mystery of what was outlined. "He is the one," he says, "who

comes with water and blood," where it is clear that the divine Theologian looks back at this occurrence and proposes this as having some unique benefit, as well as a certain proof of the truth of the Gospel. But the interpretation of this event is not met with one opinion by the Fathers. Some think He wanted His side to be opened, so that He would open the door of life to His faithful and prepare access even to the sanctuary of the Divine heart. Others want the type of Adam and Eve to have been fulfilled here. For just as the rib was removed from the side of Adam when he was sleeping, from which the bride was built for him, when Adam awoke, he said: "This is flesh of my flesh and bone of my bones." Thus, while Christ, the second Adam, fell asleep on the cross and water and blood flowed from His side, we see the first principles of the regeneration of the Church, which is His mystical bride.

Augustine, Tract 120 in John, and book 3, *The City of God*, chap. 26, observes that the two New Testament sacraments were thus signified by water baptism, which is the bath of regeneration, and by the blood of the holy supper, because the remission of sins is presented to us

through the blood of Christ in them. Although it is true these things cannot be brought without bearing the legal term of 'fructus', yet they seem especially to be connoted under these two primary benefits of Christ: justification and sanctification, which had already been outlined in the legal Covenant under water and blood. Ambrose, book 5, *On the Sacraments*, chap. 1, "Why the water, why the blood? Water to cleanse, the blood to redeem. Why from the side? Because this is where guilt comes from without grace: guilt through the woman formed from the side of Adam, but grace through the Lord Jesus Christ." And in chap. 23, "From the dead body of Christ, the life of all flowed forth, for water and blood came forth, which washes the one who is redeemed; Therefore, let us drink the price of our redemption." Augustine, Tract 120 in John, "O death from which the dead are raised! What is cleaner than this blood? What is healthier than this wound?"

XXIII. Lest it seem strange and unusual that we have said that these two benefits of Christ are signified by the words water and blood, it can easily be shown that not only John, but the Prophets themselves and the Apostles,

and even Christ Himself, often used the same phrases. As far as the Prophets are concerned, nothing occurs more frequently than the description of God's saving grace under the symbol of water, because like water it cleanses us from our filth, refreshes us and cools us in the heat of conscience, extinguishes the fire of Divine wrath, quenches the thirst of our souls, and makes us fruitful in good works. David had already spoken thus, Psalm 42:1, and 63:1-2, and here and there in the Prophets, Isa. 12:3, and 44:3, Ezek. 36[:25] & 47, and Zech. 13:1, where the grace of God is conferred by waters.

Nor did they speak otherwise of Christ's second benefit when they foretold Christ's death and His offering as a sacrifice for sin. For they assumed that blood must necessarily be shed, as in Isaiah 53:6-8, 10, Psalm 16:10 and 22:16. In fact, the mention of the blood of the covenant by which the captives were brought out of the pit where there is no water is expressed in Zech. 9:11, that is, not only had the Jews been delivered from the Babylonian captivity, but also the faithful were to be delivered from hell. Thus, the Apostles from time to time remembered the blood of Christ for redemption and the

washing of water for sanctification, Paul in Eph. 5:26, Heb. 9:11-12, 1 Cor. 6:11, 10:16, 11:24-25, and 1 Peter 1:2. But Christ himself is often read using this double symbol as both water, John 3:5, 4:14, 7:38, and blood, Luke 22:20, hence it should not be surprising if John, imitating the style of Christ, the Prophets and Apostles, says Christ came with water and blood to signify the double benefit flowing from Christ's coming.

XXIV. But it remains to be seen further why John adds that he did not come only in water, but in water and blood. He seems to have added this for two main reasons: (1) in order to show these benefits are inseparable and connected with each other by an indivisible bond; (2) in order to teach that although they should not be separated, they should not be confused, but should always be looked upon as distinct. And indeed, the conjunction had to be insinuated, so no one might think that either of these benefits could be sufficient for salvation [without the other]. For the satisfaction of God's justice would have been presented in vain for the forgiveness of sin and the justification of the sinner, unless the sinner was immediately received

through sanctification to cleanse the filth of sin and renew sinners. [I.e., The atoning blood is useless without the water of sanctification.] Thus, the renewal could not be effected only after the supposition of prior satisfaction, of course, for there were two obstacles which kept us from communion with God, where our true happiness lies: (1) *God's justice*. He did not suffer any grace to be shared with the sinner unless first satisfaction had been made for sin. (2) *Us sinners*. The injustice and defects of our lives which kept us far from His communion, since there can be no communion between the most perfect holiness and impurity. Thus, two remedies had to be employed in removing this double obstacle: the first to appease the justice of God, the second to cleanse our injustice. The first occurs in the blood of Christ who made atonement for sin; the second in the water that washes us from our filth. Hence, the necessary and indissoluble connection between these two benefits is evident. This can be confirmed by various arguments.

(1) From *Election*, which tends to calling and justification, Rom. 8:30, to the sanctification of the Spirit and the

obedience of faith and the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, 1 Peter 1:2.

(2) From the *promises* of the Covenant of Grace which connect the inscription of the Law in the hearts with the remission of sins, Jer. 31:33-34.

(3) From *Christ* himself, who was given to us as a ford and a head. Thus, let His righteousness and sanctification be for us, 1 Cor. 1:30, not only to redeem us from all iniquity, but also to purify a special people for Himself, who are devoted to good works, Titus 2:14.

(4) From the *Spirit* who is called the Spirit of holiness and comfort.

(5) From the *Gospel* which commands faith and love.

(6) From the *sacraments* which seal the remission of sins and satisfaction for us. For as we are baptized for the remission of sins, so baptism is the washing of regeneration, Titus 3:5, and a symbol of communion with Christ, Romans 6:3-4. And in the Supper the blood is presented to us as shed for the remission of sins, Matt. 26:28, and as food for the spiritual life which consists in sanctification.

XXV. As indeed the conjunction of these benefits is indicated in the words of John, so also is the distinction. For if he had just said Christ came by water and blood, it might be interpreted that there was only one benefit. It is by this false interpretation that the Popes confuse justification with sanctification. However, the Scriptures clearly teach that the two are most distinct, 1 Cor. 1:30, and 6:11, proving this fact. For justification is a judicial act which takes place before God, while sanctification is a moral act within us. The former frees us from guilt, the latter from stain; The former consists in the imputation of another's justice, but the latter flows adherently. The former is accomplished in a single act, while the latter is accomplished successively. Therefore, John very well distinguished the water from the blood to show that sanctification is always distinguished from justification and not to be confused.

XXVI. Furthermore, because he wanted to give the symbol and seal of this twin benefit in the two sacraments of the New Testament, Baptism and the holy Supper, hence it came to pass that both were also understood under the secondary terms of water and

blood. And regarding Baptism, it is indeed not obscure that this should be signified by water, since Christ willed this to be His sign, and the Scriptures often expresses this idea, Eph. 5:26, Titus 3:5. Of the Supper, even though it occurs more rarely, yet it is easily gathered, since it is a communion of the body and blood of Christ, 1 Cor. 10:16, which is instituted in commemoration of the death of Christ. The sign is not given under the name of the signee, but, in turn, the name of the sign is given to the signee. This is how the Cup is said to be Christ's blood of the New Testament, Matt. 26.

XXVII. With them thus placed, it is easy to understand how these two witnesses, water and blood, come together to bear witness to Christ. For whether we refer them to the sacraments or not, who does not see that these seals of the New Covenant were instituted for no other purpose than to confirm and seal in the Church the promises of grace and the word of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, the Son of God, our Redeemer? On the other hand, if benefits of those sacraments were pledged, it is evident that a clear testimony was given to the same truth. For since justice and λύτρον [ransom] of

infinite value were required in order to obtain the complete forgiveness of sinners, it was necessary that Christ was truly God our Redeemer, who, at a favorable time acquired it with His own blood, which neither all the sacred things of the Gentiles nor all the legal victims could redeem because it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to remove sin. Again, since in order to renew and sanctify a corrupt man, a certain divine power was absolutely necessary, which would raise him, though dead in sins, and make him a new creature, who can doubt Christ, who by His grace is effectual in such a work, is really the Son of God and the promised Messiah? For who but God could cause a man, who by his nature is most inclined to love himself, to renounce himself, and to embrace with joy a teaching which is completely contrary to reason, that is to say, the cross and every kind of misery associated with it? Who but God could enlighten a blind man, soften a stone, raise a dead man, and transform him into a new creature by a wonderful metamorphosis? When, therefore, the grace of Christ works this miracle in the faithful from time to time, His divine power is then asserted and witnessed.

XXVIII. Moreover, since we have said that by ‘the blood of some’ we may understand the steadfastness and faith of the martyrs who, by dying for Christ, bore witness to what the nomenclature of being martyred and martyrdom pertains to, let us see whether this *σχέσι* [relation] was also indicated by John. Now this is not difficult to gather from the first meaning of blood. For if the blood suggests the benefit of justification that we receive in the blood of Christ, there is nothing absurd if we say that the blood of Christ by which sins are atoned for is not only witnessed in the conscience of each believer through the sense of the forgiveness of sins and our reconciliation with God, but above all in the marvelous constancy of the martyrs in the midst of torments, which arises from no other source than from the efficacy of the blood of Christ, by which, convinced of the expiation of their sins, they endure all torments, not only patiently, but also with joy. Thus, they seal the teaching of Christ with their blood. Therefore, three acts will be designated by which the duty of the Christian is fulfilled, and by which the Christian truth is proved: to believe, to do and to suffer, or faith, hope, and love:

truth by faith, which is through the Spirit, the innocence of life and love which is through water, and hope, or constancy in afflictions and death itself, from the sense of the remission of sins in the blood of Christ, which is foreshadowed by the blood.

XXIX. Furthermore, these witnesses are said to testify on earth through the antithesis to the heavenly ones who were said to testify in Heaven; for although their power is not earthly, but heavenly and divine, yet they are neither seen nor heard, nor are they felt lofty as superiors, but they have manifested themselves in the Church and in the minds of men, especially those who dwell on earth. For whether by the Spirit we understand the teaching of the Gospel resounding in the Church or the gift of faith impressed on the heart of the faithful, whether we refer water and blood to the two sacraments of the New Testament or to the two blessings of Christ which are sealed with them; It is certain that all these things would exert their power on earth to testify to Christ so there is no need for a laborious search for them when they have been set forth in the Church and in the individual believers.

XXX. Thus, we see who these three witnesses are and what is their testimony. It remains for us to add something about their unity and agreement which John hints at when he adds 'these three are one.' And although the Complutense Edition does not retain this passage, it is not only the codices that prove it, but also the nature of the matter itself, so that we may know that these witnesses all agree on exactly the same thing, aiming at one and the same goal. Here, above all, we must observe the distinction between the unity of the heavenly and earthly witnesses. For John had said of them, 'They are one,' but of these 'they are one' or 'in one,' which, of course, must be thought to have been done for no other reason than to signify a certain memorable diversity which occurs between these witnesses, lest the same should be thought of both, but in them a unity of essence. Indeed, in these things we should only recognize the unity of agreement which can occur between very different things. For when these witnesses are regarded in any way, either externally or internally, and are of different natures, they cannot come together in any other way than by consent to give one

and the same testimony about Christ, so they are said to tend towards 'one' and at the same time come together to bear witness to the same thing about Christ. And this was to be remembered lest, owing to the contrast of their natures, those things should be thought to appear differently, drawing the minds of men in different directions. For it is not always the case of witnesses who are called in to confirm something by giving the same statement as their testimony, but oftentimes they bring forth different, nay, opposite statements, according to the greater or lesser of the matter to which they testify.

XXXI. But how they agree on the same thing is not difficult to understand. For no matter how one looks at it, it is certain that they all converge on the demonstration of the Divinity of Christ and the Redemption wrought by Him. The Gospel certainly does not tend to any other end than "ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name," John 20:31. And the sacraments, which are the seals of the covenant, have no other purpose than to seal the same promises in the hearts of the faithful. The internal gifts, which we have

said are included in these witnesses, do not look to anyone else. For why should the Spirit instill faith in our souls unless we believe the Gospel of God about Jesus Christ our Redeemer? Why is either the remission of sins and justification applied to us in His blood, or the work of regeneration begun in us and carried forward day by day by the efficacy of grace, except that we may acknowledge the divine power of Christ working in us which will bring to completion the salvation begun in that first day?

XXXII. But the foundation of this unity cannot be claimed from any other source than from the indissoluble connection between the divine graces and the benefits of Christ. For they are so closely connected with each other in such a way that when one is established the others necessarily follow, as the Apostle clearly demonstrated in the golden chain of salvation, Romans 8:29-30. Thus, in testifying, they cannot but conspire and agree in one accord. Nor do they agree only regarding the one and the same object to which they bear witness, but also in that they render mutual assistance to each other, and that each strengthens the other. For as the heavenly

witnesses bear witness to one another, the Father bears witness to the merit of the Son, the Son bears witness to the grace of the Father, and the Holy Spirit applies to us and seals the grace of the Father and the merit of the Son. This is also the case with these witnesses [on earth]; for as the Gospel illuminates the sacraments, so the sacraments confirm the Gospel. As faith is proved by holiness and good works, holiness depends on faith and always accompanies it, and is strengthened more and more in us by the consolation and peace of conscience.

XXXIII. As indeed, these things have been joined together by God in the work of salvation, so in us they are never to be torn apart, for what God has joined together, man cannot separate. Hence, it is clear that neither the word should be separated from the sacraments, nor the sacraments from the word, if we wish to perceive the fruit of both. Neither is faith to be separated from love, nor can justification be obtained without sanctification. For such is the necessity of all these benefits together for salvation, so that he who wishes to retain only one of them loses both, and he who does not possess both acquires neither. What good is faith without love? Or

justification without sanctification? Or how could they convince us of the evangelical truth and the certainty of our salvation unless they drew all the parts of salvation behind them?

XXXIV. Now, having discussed these in this way, it remains to satisfy some scruples which may arise from what has been said. In the first place, it is asked of John why the water precedes the blood, if the regeneration by the blood is [also] to be understood by the water, since it is certain that justification precedes sanctification, and that no one can be regenerated by God through the Spirit unless God has first granted the remission of sins, appeased by the blood of the Son. This is easy to answer: John enumerates it this way, not only on account of the external means of baptism, for example, in addition to the Holy Supper, in which it is agreed that baptism is the sacrament of heavenly water, that is, of our initiation and regeneration, preceding the supper, which is the sacrament of Christ's death and blood, and therefore, of our nourishment through Him, but also by reason of the internal means or benefits of Christ, insofar as they are viewed not in themselves or on the part of God, but as to

their sense on our part. For in itself and on the part of God, blood precedes water, because God first appeases us before He regenerates us. But on our part, and as regards the sense, water precedes blood, because our justification could not be known unless it was given by the renewal which through water, as there would be no place in us for renewal unless it was given by illumination and the gift of faith which is hinted at by the Spirit.

XXXV. Secondly, it must be asked whether it follows from what we are to understand by the 'blood' of the Holy Supper to be the real and substantial presence of the blood of Christ in the Supper, as some of the Lutherans maintain, and Gerhard among them, who, among other things, wants to infer from this the real, true and substantial presence of the blood of Christ in the Supper. If by the word 'blood' is meant the supper, they say, it is necessary that actual blood be under or with the visible elements actually present in the Supper, just as true water is joined in Baptism, for, they say, it could not be designated by that name unless the blood was actually present. And who does not see that the consequence of their reasoning is tottering? For if the word 'blood'

signifies the Supper, it follows that the blood *must* be present substantially under the elements. However, it is so called *not literally*, but figuratively through sacramental metonymy, because the blood of Christ is a sign and a seal, as is clear from the sacramental phraseology by which the name of the sign is often given to the signified. The same phraseology is used when signifying bread as the body of Christ, and the cup as the New Testament in the blood of Christ: Not properly, because disparate cannot be appropriately predicated on disparate, but only tropically; no matter how the Pontiffs wish to $\rho\eta\tau\omega$ [express] it. Nor does the reasoning claimed from the water which is joined to the blood, and which is seen in baptism, prove this. For if baptism is designated by it, it is clear that this designation is taken from a sign and an element that must be present locally, not from a thing signified that cannot admit of such a presence.

XXXVI. And therefore, from this it is gathered how the presence of Christ's blood and body in the Supper are to be understood. [But in their erroneous opinion], Christ's blood is local and not distant, as if the blood once shed on the cross was still to be sought in the earth and to be

taken into the mouth and poured into the veins. This is clearly contrary to the truth of the body of Christ and to its local ascension into heaven as well as to the nature of the sacrament which is instituted in memory of the absent Christ. But the signs are partly sacramental and symbolical which represent them and seal them as ordained by God. Partly spiritual and mystical in the dignity of the participants of the faith in so far as by filling them with true faith they become partakers of the flesh and blood of Christ who died for them, that is, of the most perfect merit and power of His life-giving death, and so they merge into one body with Him. Hence, our substantial union with Christ follows on the basis of persons and communion, real but mystical, on the basis of benefits.

XXXVII. Thirdly, it is asked whether because the Spirit is said to be witnessed in us, this favors the delusion of enthusiasts who boast of a private Spirit and His mysterious revelations. I answer: We deny because, as previously seen, this Spirit testifying in the heart is never to be separated from the same witnessing in the Word, nor is it considered to bear witness objectively through

private revelations separately from the Word, but efficiently through the demonstration and application of the truth proposed in the Word, and so these two are not to be opposed but must be composed so that neither the Word can work without the Spirit, nor the Spirit without the Word. This is most alien to the mind of the fanatics who, under the pretext of private revelations, hold the Scriptures as if they were a dead letter which kills, and so on. Nor can such a Spirit be said to be deprived, for although He may be designated by that name subjectively because He is in each believer, He cannot be regarded as such originally because He is the same Spirit in all who works all things, 1 Cor. 12:4.

XXXVIII. Furthermore, from this threefold testimony, both heavenly and earthly, the invincible demonstration of the truth of the Gospel is formed. For that which is most evidently confirmed by divine testimonies and by those in heaven and on earth παναρμονικως [harmoniously] agreeing with each other, as being beyond all danger of doubt placed on this side of εποχην [cessation], is to be most firmly believed, unless we will make God a liar, which is by far the most terrible of all

crimes. Now that Jesus of Nazareth is the eternal Son of God, who came in the flesh, the true Messiah and our Redeemer, in whose name alone eternal life is offered and conferred to those who believe, which is the sum and summation of the Gospel, confirmed by the unanimous agreement of heaven and earth, and neither the divine Persons in the heavens nor their benefits on earth [differ]: This as the most certain eternal oracle of truth, the pillar of our faith, the ἀσάλευτον [immovable] foundation of the Christian religion must always be retained, so that it is clearly ἀναπολογητός [inexcusable] whosoever still dares to refute such wonderful witnesses in the cloud of his unbelief.

XXXIX. So that in Him we ought to marvel at the supreme and ineffable goodness of God towards us, who willed the certainty of our faith in this manner. So, we should acquiesce to this divine testimony in such a way that we do not allow ourselves to take refuge in human testimony in confirming the divine authority of the word and the truth of the heavenly mysteries. This what the Popes wrongly want: to suspend the authority of Scripture on the testimony of the Church, as if God

depended on man, and the eternal and infallible truth of the Creator depended on the fallible and uncertain voice of the creature. It is far from us that we should heap upon ourselves the guilt of so great a crime, but rather, with a devout mind toward God, looking forward to the irrefutable testimony of eternal truth from Him, and giving Him praise for that which is self-evident. And if we hear these divine witnesses testifying on both sides, and endeavor to respond to them in word and deed also as a man; if the Spirit cries out, let us believe with faith; if we are initiated and strengthened by the Lord's sacraments, let us be careful not to nullify their power by our impiety and break the seals of the covenant with such treachery. Yes, having once been washed with water and dipped in blood, let us confirm the benefit of justification and the grace of regeneration through faith, with the pursuit of holiness in such a way that in the future there will be no occasion to doubt these things. Until we all arrive at the unity of faith and the consummation of happiness, where, having been brought into the present matter and freed from all sin and guilt, we shall no longer need external witnesses or symbols, because we shall see no

more through a glass, darkly, but face to face: and God Himself will be παντα εν πασι [all in all]. Amen.

The End